

COULD YOU BE A COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDER?

We all hope we never need to call for an Ambulance in an emergency, but if we do, everyone wants the fastest possible response.

Generally, an Ambulance crew will be first on the scene to assist you with your emergency. On other occasions, a Volunteer Community First Responder (CFR) will reach you first, if the CFR is the nearest available person to the patient. The CFR will support the patient until an ambulance crew arrives.

We are fortunate to have a team of three local CFRs nearby (North Cave and South Cave), who give up some of their time entirely voluntarily, to be trained by Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) and to attend certain emergencies, including cardiac arrests, heart attacks, chest pains, strokes, breathing and asthma problems, diabetic emergencies, seizures, choking, allergic reactions, and falls.

The CFRs carry a defibrillator, an oxygen supply, and other equipment to provide initial basic life support to a patient. They are trained to carry out on-the-scene assessment of the patient and record information to pass over to the ambulance crew on their arrival.

The three CFRs primarily cover South and North Cave, but also travel to Newbald, and numerous other neighbouring communities including Newport, Gilberdyke, Hotham, and Little Weighton, if required. They attend incidents in people's homes, workplaces, schools, at shops, restaurants, hotels, care homes and, on a number of occasions, in public places.

"Vitality, where we are close by, we can often be on the scene within minutes", said one of the CFRs, "and patients or relatives often compliment us on our response time.

"Once we are on scene, as well as providing initial support and gathering information about the patient, we are a source of reassurance for the patient that we are with them and that we can support them if their condition deteriorates."

The CFR role was originally conceived to attend Cardiac Arrests, and provide CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) in the first few critical minutes after an Arrest; the remit has widened over the years, as CFRs have demonstrated their value to the patients and ambulance crews, often assisting in comforting family members, and moving patients to a waiting ambulance.

There are nearly 1000 CFRs across Yorkshire, from all walks of life, who attend around 17000 incidents per year in total.

CFRs need not be clinicians by profession, but are rigorously trained and regularly up-skilled.

One of the key attributes though is the CFRs' people skills, where, without exception, they are compassionate, caring, competent, and calm under pressure.

“The pressure can be intense in some of the situations we face.” said Chris, who has almost 15 years of voluntary service as a CFR, “All the more so because we sometimes know the patient and their family personally; however, the rewards are fantastic, especially where we have already made a positive difference before the ambulance arrives, and provided the patient with the comfort that they needed to deal with their crisis”.

Being a CFR is a wonderful opportunity to give something tangible back to the community, which was the attraction for Iain, when he retired four years ago, and sold his businesses. “I like interacting with all kinds of people of all ages.” said Iain. “My business was a people-business, and I knew I could transfer that skill to this role, provided I was properly trained and equipped, and I love it. The jobs are not always pretty and, sadly, the outcome for the patient is not always positive, but we know that we have done our level-best each and every time.”

Our most-recently qualified CFR, Sara, has extensive experience of dealing with children, and all of the health and medical issues they can experience, so this is a logical fit for her.

“I am already loving the role”, said Sara, “and thoroughly enjoying the team spirit of my fellow CFRs and the Ambulance crews we meet.

“Everyone’s dedication to patient care is astonishingly high; there is an immense spirit of collaboration between the CFRs and with the ambulance crews and the dispatchers at the Emergency Operations Centre.”

YAS are always keen to hear from potential new recruits for this voluntary activity.

“The CFRs fulfil a role that is highly-valued.” said Tom Render from YAS, who trains and manages our CFRs and those in many other parts of Yorkshire. “The larger our team, the more hours of coverage we can give to our neighbours and friends”, said Tom, “and the more calls CFR’s will be able to attend.

“The key attributes of the people we seek as CFRs are integrity, compassion, calmness when operating alone under pressure, risk-awareness and a true sense of professionalism and responsibility.

“The process we employ to attract, train and retain the most suitable people ensures that we and the applicants know what we’re undertaking.”

If you would like to talk informally about this role, please contact
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To apply to become a CFR, please contact the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

<http://www.communityresponders.yas.nhs.uk/>