



North West  
Ambulance Service  
NHS Trust



**Celebrating**

**20**

**years of  
community  
first responders**

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# Introduction

Welcome to this special review which celebrates 20 years of community first responder (CFR) history. We have created this booklet to mark this incredible milestone and celebrate the voluntary work you have undertaken in the North West over the last two decades and continue to do so. Whilst we would need an encyclopaedia-sized book to document CFR history in its entirety, we hope you enjoy reading some of the accounts and stories we have included.

I am proud to say that we have one of the largest and longest established CFR schemes in the country. There are 870 of you that volunteer throughout the region and we are recruiting more with our award-winning public campaign 'Hero Next Door'.

I was fascinated to read how a trip to Seattle in 1994 helped to change the face of community resuscitation in the North West and indeed across the country. Our former colleague Steve Lane was instrumental in this development and he really had a passion for the chain of survival which, as you know, represents the critical actions required to treat life-threatening emergencies.

Since joining the organisation, I have seen and heard many extraordinary stories of the support and reassurance you have given to people in need of emergency medical intervention. The dedication and commitment you show, and the number of lives that you have saved, make you all a vital part of the communities you live in. You are literally the difference between life and death when it comes to cardiac arrests and I want to thank you on behalf of the ambulance service for the important work that you do.

**Daren Mochrie QAM**  
Chief Executive



# Where it all began

## 1994 - What a year!

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Steve Lane retired in 2010 from his position as head of education and training. Steve was instrumental in setting up CFR teams in the north west or 'first responders' as they were called back in the 1990s. Here's Steve's account.

“One of the first tasks I was given, when promoted to senior training manager for the then-Lancashire Ambulance Service NHS Trust in 1994, was to respond to issues being raised by members of the public in rural communities about the long ambulance response times.

“I clearly remember organising a public meeting with a small group of concerned residents on a cold rainy night in a church hall in Hambleton, Lancashire to talk about training in basic life support (BLS) skills. I expected to be faced with concerns and criticism about the long response times, but was pleasantly surprised to find that those present were eager to discuss ways they could help themselves prior to the arrival of an ambulance.”

That small meeting in Hambleton generated enthusiasm and community spirit that became the driving force behind the developments of a volunteer network that followed. Volunteers came forward from the surrounding area and basic life support training took place in people's homes, churches and village halls.

Steve continued: “I very quickly realised there was a need for more coordination between those trained and emergency calls made. If those trained in basic life support could be informed about a collapse or sudden illness, then maybe they could go to the patient to help before the ambulance arrived.





## Heart appeal wins top training award

Lancashire Ambulance Service NHS Trust has received a National Training Award for its innovative Heart of Lancashire Appeal.

The appeal was set up to stop unnecessary deaths from heart attacks and raise enough money to purchase 300 automatic external defibrillators. These life-saving machines are being placed strategically around the county with teams of people trained in basic life support and the use of the defibrillators.

Lancashire Ambulance Service has one of the fastest emergency response times in the country at an average of just over seven minutes, but heart attack victims need help within four minutes.

Stephen Lane, senior training manager with the Trust, was presented with the award at a ceremony at Mettram Hall, Prestbury, Cheshire. From Mr Lane's initial concept, the service's Heart of Lancashire Appeal, has won the support of hundreds of ordinary members of the public, who have learned basic life-saving skills to help heart attack sufferers before ambulance crews arrive.

The appeal has become a registered charity and was initially facilitated by nine trained Transport Staff who in basic life support techniques, able and ready to step in where they may be needed to help critically ill patients.

Mr Lane said: "This has been wholeheartedly supported by the public and by the rural communities in particular, who often feel isolated. This scheme has direct benefits for them, it could be a relative or a neighbour of theirs who has



At the National Training Awards ceremony (from left) Alan Ellerton (Over Wyre first responder), Peter Cooney (Director of Human Resources for Lancashire Ambulance Service), Stephen Lane (Senior Training Manager for Lancashire Ambulance Service), and Diane Oxbury from the BBC.

been taken ill."

This has been particularly the case Over Wyre where Neil Houldsworth, PPS Supervisor for the Blackpool District, liaised with local people to form a group of First Responders. The group started in March 1999 with training and fund-raising

activities, eventually going 'live' on the 22 December 1999. The need for such a group was borne out during the next 12 months with over 300 responses.

Neil said: "This was a purely community-led initiative and being an Over Wyre resident, I was pleased to act as a

link with the Ambulance Service who provided support and backing for the group". There are now some 600 trained responders in the six villages Over Wyre transform it from a remote area to probably one of the safest.

Stephen Lane said: "We entered the NTA awards because we thought this was worth sharing. It is something different and it works. It has been more successful than we could ever have dreamed of".

Run by the Department for Employment and Education, the National Training Awards are the UK's top accolade for businesses and individuals that have achieved lasting excellence and success through training.

Judges faced a difficult task in selecting winners from nearly 700 entries that were received from companies, organisations and individuals throughout the UK.



Stephen Lane demonstrates an automatic defibrillator to new volunteers

Photo courtesy of the Lancashire Evening Telegraph



“After further discussion with Chief Executive David Hill at the time, I was asked to visit Seattle in America to look at a similar new initiative being introduced there. I also took the opportunity to visit Physio Control, a manufacturer and distributor of emergency defibrillation and automated CPR equipment, who at the time was developing defibrillators in Seattle.

“Upon my return, I presented my recommendations to the local paramedic steering committee who wholeheartedly supported the concept of developing pockets of voluntary responders in carefully selected isolated communities. The responders would be provided with pagers and would be supported with training in the use of a defibrillator.”

The scheme continued to expand interested people came forward from numerous areas. Lives were being saved and success rates in resuscitation continued to improve.

Steve said: “My training managers supported the scheme by delivering training in their own time and operational staff also came forward to support the scheme. The scheme was publicised by BBC Radio Lancashire and training sessions were televised, creating more awareness in the local community.

“I was presented with a national training award by the late Dianne Oxberry in recognition of the scheme's unique approach to the teaching of members of the public in life support skills.”

Schemes were developed across the whole of Lancashire, Cumbria and across the whole of the UK following this.

“The 'first responder' scheme became known as the 'community first responder' (CFR) scheme after I retired in 2010. By this time, small CFR management teams had been introduced to manage the initiative that had grown massively from its inception back in 1994.

“Even now I am regularly invited to speak to groups about the scheme and my time in the ambulance service. The one group I remember more than any was in Arnsdale and Silverdale, on the coastline of Morecambe Bay, where among those present were two elderly people. I remember the lady saying that she had collapsed on a pier in Seattle while on holiday. Her husband said that out of nowhere a young girl turned up with a defibrillator and resuscitated his wife who was in cardiac arrest. She was taken to hospital and had bypass surgery before returning to England.

“It seemed so ironic that I was speaking to a couple who had had first-hand experience of a first responder. This was the confirmation that what we had started back in 1994 was worth it.”

Well done Steve!

# Accounts from the counties

Staff and volunteers from across the North West have pieced together sections of CFR history over the last twenty years.

## Cumbria & Lancashire

Much of the work Steve started was instrumental in the growth of CFR teams across Cumbria and Lancashire and indeed across the country.

### The birth of Great Broughton

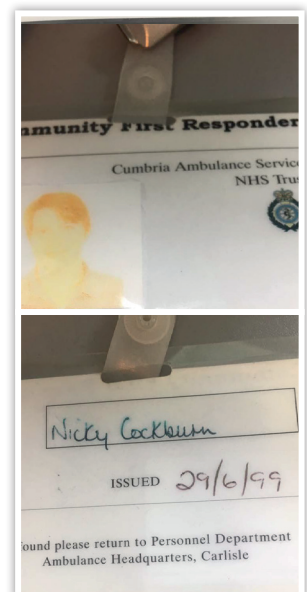
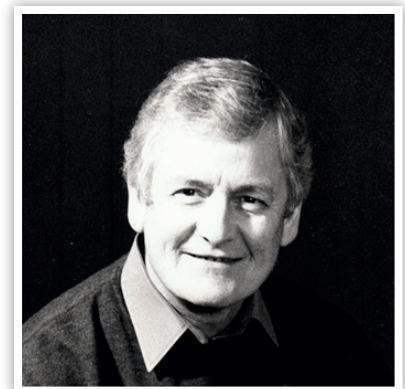
We spoke to retired chairman of the very first CFR team to form in 1998, Ron Williams as well as former CFR Nicky Cockburn and former Team Leader Ralph Palmer, who were both involved from the beginning. The trio was central in setting up Great Broughton CFR team in Cumbria, which was the first north of England team.

In 1998, Ron presented the idea, alongside Ralph who was working for the ambulance service at the time, of creating a CFR team to interested parties at a publicised event in the village hall in Little Broughton. The interest was evident and a group of volunteers, including Nicky, were trained by the ambulance service and formed a team with a committee in December 1998. The team was formally established as a charity in 1999 and was the second community first response team in the country.

Ron recalls: “This was just over a year following the country's first responder scheme at Thorncombe in Devon. I had telephoned the post mistress there who had acquired an a defibrillator and was offering this service on her own. She was also responding to other types of emergency. So I guess she was the very first responder in England.”

Great Broughton CFR team had a great start courtesy of the Cumbrian Newspapers Group which gave the team its first defibrillator and then donated £700. The parish councils also donated money regularly and the team had donations from New Balance shoes, Lloyd Motors, Lady Lionesses, the neighbourhood forum, Rotary Club and many more, plus members and their partners, villagers, local pubs and shops supported the initiative through donations fundraising and sponsorship.

As the first team in the county, the volunteers trialled different types of activation methods and it was their team set-up that acted as a blueprint for the rest of the teams in the county and across the UK. The team has helped many other teams become established and has even given advice to a team in Quebec in Canada, who they are now in close contact with.



## The Heart of Lancashire Appeal

Having identified the benefits community defibrillation could have on patients suffering cardiac arrest in rural and hard to reach communities, Lancashire Ambulance Service (LAS) as it was then, developed a campaign designed to raise funds to develop the concept of community defibrillation and CFRs. Many rural communities adopted The Heart of Lancashire appeal and the race began to see who would be the first area to raise enough funds for the first defibrillator. Silverdale community began raising funds first in early 1999, followed by Over Wyre, Garstang, Longridge, Chipping, Ribchester, Clitheroe and Whalley. The first team to be trained and become active was Over Wyre towards the end of 1999. With Silverdale going live in 2000, the other areas close behind them in 2000 and 2001.

By 2005, LAS boasted 43 CFR teams actively attending emergency life threatening calls from members of their communities. The Heart of Lancashire Appeal was handed over to the new NWAS trust fund with the merger of the ambulance services in 2006.



## Cheshire & Merseyside

Talk of CFR schemes within Cheshire and Merseyside started to surface in 2000 when the then-Merseyside Regional Ambulance Service (MRAS) began working with the Institute of Health Care and Development on developing a CFR qualification.

At the time, CFR schemes were being promoted as 'simple things save lives, this should part of our daily lives'. This notion hit home with local communities and the belief that a trained CFR could improve patient survival by delivering basic life support until the ambulance arrived was embraced.

A presentation about community first responder schemes was given to interested public in Congleton Conservative Club by current NWAS managers; Ray Lunt and Peter Mulcahy. Ray and Peter, who were in previous roles at the time, remember it not only for the significance of what they were trying to achieve at the meeting, but the fact that the event took place on 11 September 2001, as the attacks on the World Trade Centres in New York were taking place.

The first scheme (Congleton) was formed later that year. In 2002, Holmes Chapel, Knutsford and Nantwich CFR teams were started and this led on to many more teams being established over the years. Teams are still being developed across the counties with Huyton, Birkenhead and Wallasey, all based in Merseyside, starting this year.

Community Resuscitation Manager Rob Hussey says: "All of our CFR teams in Cheshire and Merseyside have formed in areas where there was a proven case for need. Initially, specific rural areas were targeted and more recently moving into urban areas.

"The number of volunteers in the area has fluctuated over the years, however we started with approximately 11 back in 2001 and now have just under 100 active volunteers."



# The birth of Knutsford CFR

CFR Sylvia Thomas has been with the team in Knutsford since it was created 17 years ago.

The team was established in 2002 when member of the public Terry Mitchell heard about first responders and thought it would be a great initiative to have in Knutsford. He had also heard about defibrillators on every street corner in Seattle, USA and felt this was also a good idea. He initially made contact with the then-Mersey Regional Ambulance Service (MRAS) to ask about setting up a group. He contacted Knutsford Council and asked for its support and then arranged a public meeting with the council and MRAS.

Sylvia recalls: "The representative of MRAS gave a talk on the subject and asked for volunteers so Terry, another chap called John Mills who also founded the group, myself and about 14 other members of the public signed up. Our course started in March of that year and was one evening per week. It was instructed by a former ambulance manager called Steve Evans, and we qualified at the end of July that year. We took August off to recover from the course, build up courage and went live in September 2002. In those days we were able to cover 9am - 10pm, seven days a week including Christmas Day; sadly that isn't possible anymore.

"We used to operate out of our own cars, taking the kit to the next person on duty. As our kit grew we decided that we needed a team vehicle located at a base where we would drive to and swap our cars for the van, so an appeal went out for funds and we bought the team van.

"From then we went from strength to strength and we started fundraising for defibrillators and introduced the first three to the town in 2003. For as long as there are people passionate about community resuscitation, Knutsford CFR Trust (now a registered charity) will go on for another 17 years!"

## Volunteers on call for when a stranger calls

IT was a quiet first day for Knutsford's First Responder team on Monday as they prepared to put nine months of preparation into practice.

Sylvia Thomas and Robin Gerrard, the first duty responders on call as the scheme was officially launched, waited anxiously by their radios for the first callout from Mersey Regional Ambulance Service.

"I think they both nearly had nervous breakdowns waiting for calls that did not arrive," said spokesman Terry Mitchell yesterday (Tuesday).

### Life-saving

Armed with £5,000 worth of equipment, including state-of-the-art automatic defibrillators, oxygen units, a first aid kit and a direct radio link to the emergency control centre, Sylvia was the first volunteer waiting for the call.

She had volunteered to do a double shift and work eight hours on her first day instead of four.

"I am keen to get going now we have gone live," said Sylvia, 47. "I have been a British Red Cross first aider for 35 years and not all of it is new to me."

"This job is a lot more than just dealing with the sick person who is on the floor. It is about dealing with the person standing next to them as well." After a quiet shift from 10am to

# Responders to rescue

by SHELLY SMITH

6pm, Sylvia handed over the reins - and equipment - to Robin Gerrard who manned the radio for a quiet four-hour shift in the evening.

The 22 volunteers from Knutsford and Mobblerley, who include councillors, nurses, teachers and a finance director, will work on a seven day rota system devised by volunteers John and Ronnie Mills.

"Having seen how successfully they have juggled the availability of the team to give seven day coverage I would never play either of them at chess," said Terry.

The Knutsford First Responder team was officially launched at the Methodist Church Hall in Princess Street on Monday.

The responders will operate in a three-mile radius of Knutsford town centre to Bucklow Hill, Mobblerley and Mere, giving life-saving treatment until paramedics arrive.



ON HAND: Knutsford First Responder Sylvia Thomas was on call to help - if needed - on Monday



LEFT: The scheme is launched

Picture: Mick James

November 20, 2002

## First-aiders want to buy life-saving equipment in his memory

# Friends' tribute to Terry

by SHELLY SMITH

Two volunteers on his team have set up a fund to buy a defibrillator which can be stored in a town centre shop.

The group's founder, Terry Mitchell, who died of lung cancer about a year ago, wanted the equipment to be available to everyone in an emergency.

A fund will be available at the City Life shop in Parkgate by number one in his name," said Lane.

Mr Mitchell had seen the benefits during a trip to America. He told it.

at Manning's grabbed the machine and a remote triggered outside the Red Cow in Castle Park.

From my situation the wife the woman's chest but the machine and she almost not give her another chance.

Mr Thomas just had important things to do in an emergency," said Mr Thomas.

The evening was here already prepared their weight in gold."

On November 16, Mr Mitchell's widow presented a quiet night at Knutsford Bowling Club in the memory and named £500 for the group he founded.

"We needed to do something positive because this is such a valuable thing for the community," said

John, 59. Over the past six months the First Responders have been called to save three 2002 residents and have others arrived before paramedics.

The 18 volunteers cover Knutsford and the village within a five-mile radius.

The group now have a highly-visible, high-visibility van and carry a defibrillator.

But the volunteers are still afraid of how some people in Knutsford know little about basic first aid.

Knutsford First Responders are offering free first aid courses at Bucklow Hill, Mobblerley and Mere, the New Year.

For more information or to book a place call 01256 652642

## Volunteers needed to make new service for heart patients work



# Job for the heart and soul

by MICHELLE GILLIES

VOLUNTEERS are wanted to help save lives in Knutsford.

Residents can sign up to the town's First Responders scheme at a meeting on Monday.

"The scheme is great news for the people of Knutsford," said co-ordinator Terry Mitchell. "If someone has a heart attack in Bowle's first responder could be there within a minute or two."

"And that could be the difference between life and death for the victim." Every minute three people in Britain have a heart attack - but only one survives.

First responders will assist Mersey Regional Ambulance Service by giving life-saving treatment until paramedics arrive - and increasing the chances of the victim's survival.

"Although the ambulance service is excellent their resources are often stretched," said Mr Mitchell. "But, as locally based response units will get to a patient quicker and research has shown the sooner a victim receives treatment the better their chances of survival."

"If we help to save just one life, it will be worth it."

The scheme will operate within a three-mile radius of Knutsford town centre - in Mobblerley, Bucklow Hill and Mere and Country Club.



PLEA FOR HELP: Terry Mitchell needs volunteers

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## Greater Manchester

NWAS Blue Light Collaboration and Community Engagement Manager Andy Redgrave, was instrumental in setting up CFR schemes with the then-Greater Manchester Ambulance Service (GMAS).

Andy said: “In 1999, Sector Manager Francis Dreniw asked me to look at a project working with communities and volunteers to improve survival rates from sudden out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. At this time, very few people were trained in basic life support and even fewer had ever heard of a defibrillator.

“We began the CFR project in Manchester by looking at areas of poor performance and high risk of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. Through local research we were able to identify three areas within our county that met the specific criteria which included Partington, Saddleworth and Horwich. In late 1999, we began to meet with people from these local communities to explain the concept of a CFR which sparked an interest.”

The uptake Andy had from local people in these communities was overwhelming and in Partington alone, they had over 30 volunteers sign up at the very first meeting.

Andy continued: “I remember it being a truly amazing time working with and recruiting volunteers. Even though this was new to local people, they fully engaged with GMAS and embraced the CFR concept to help support their communities.

“It was always a privilege for me to teach and to watch new CFRs learn life-saving skills whilst using defibrillators, which at that time were cutting edge technology. CFRs back then were equipped only with a defibrillator, some bandages, a mobile phone and a pager but they responded to the most serious of all life threatening emergencies such as a cardiac arrest.

“From the very first discussions with our communities, it was recognised early that this initiative would grow. Other communities across Greater Manchester began to hear about these schemes through the media reporting on stories and the successes of lives being saved.

“British Heart Foundation fully supported GMAS by helping to finance the role of the CFR manager in the formative years as well as providing defibrillators to save lives of those who suffer out of hospital cardiac arrests.”



# Looking back over the years

## Life-saving heroes

It is heartening to see the real difference that you make to people's lives, there are people who are enjoying life and living it to the full thanks to your amazing work.

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### Greater Manchester Man's life saved by volunteer friend he hadn't seen for thirty years

In 2012, William Coop, 46, almost died when he collapsed and suffered a sudden cardiac arrest and a paramedic was quickly sent to the scene with a CFR. They fought for 40 minutes to resuscitate him and managed to shock his heart back into action using a defibrillator.

Dad-of-two William was taken to Wythenshawe Hospital where he made a good recovery and was allowed home after six weeks. William and his wife wanted to thank the paramedic and CFR personally and were stunned to find out that the volunteer who had helped save his life was Simon Morrell – he and William had been good friends as teenagers but had lost touch.

The pair were reunited again at Altrincham Ambulance Station. They hadn't seen each other since William was 16 meaning Simon, now 48, didn't recognise him. Remarkably, William and Simon lived just around the corner from each other in Timperley.

Simon said: “When I arrived at William's house I knew the incident was very serious and just got stuck in, working on him as best we could. It was quite worrying as he didn't respond at first but then his heart kicked in again which was a massive relief.

“When I later heard the patient's name from the ambulance service, it took my breath away as I realised it was my friend. It made what I did even more meaningful and special. It was one in a million.”

Simon recently left his job in engineering to take up a place as an Emergency Medical Technician with NWAS.



## Cheshire

# I saved my son's life

Bollington and Macclesfield CFR, Chris Warham has a very unique life saver story which did not take place in Cheshire but led him to become a CFR.

In July 2017, Chris and his family were spending time around a lake in the French Alps with a frisbee. With no warning whatsoever his son Matthew, age 15, shouted "Dad" and slipped under the water.

Chris said: "Instinct told me straight away something was very wrong as I crossed the 15 metres to where I had seen him vanish in double quick time. As I pulled him from the bottom he was unconscious and I had to carry, swim and drag him the 30 metres to the side of the lake.

"At first I thought he'd drowned so gave him two rescue breaths and then started CPR. A crowd had gathered on the beach and someone had alerted the lifeguard 100 metres away. They arrived with a defibrillator.

"That day we had three pieces of luck on our side; I saw where he went under water, I was with him (I had some BLS training from a previous career) and we were within 100 metres of a defibrillator.

"We got Matthew back after eight minutes and three shocks. Two years later Matthew has had no further events and he has an implantable cardioverter defibrillator fitted. He has completed GCSEs and first year of A-levels and is currently



recovering from the Leeds Music Festival! Events like these change you for ever.

"Sitting outside the hospital in Geneva I found the CFR role while researching cardiac arrest and recovery, and decided there and then that's what I would do. I want to help give the same chances to people in my community as I wouldn't wish what happened to us on anybody. If I can help anybody in my community then this is great to me.

"I qualified in October 2018 and since then have responded to 54 calls, including one arrest. In the same period Sue, my wife, has done a fantastic job and raised £14,000 to get defibrillators and training in 12 local schools."



## Merseyside

# CFRs don't just save people!

In May 2018, CFR Jonathan Cunningham responded to an emergency call to a flat in Southport. On arrival he could see the person had collapsed in the hall. Accompanied by the police, who forced entry, it was immediately apparent that the resident had been dead for some weeks. Jonathan's attention was then drawn to a small dog who had been locked up with the resident. It was an adorable and playful dog. Jonathan quickly fed and watered the poor, ravenous canine.

Emergency services were at a loss as to what to do with the dog. The dog warden was called and stated that as there were no surviving relatives it was highly likely the dog would be destroyed. Jonathan was devastated and offered to take the dog home. Permission was provided from the police and Jonathan took the pooch home.

One year on Jonathan says: "Poppy has a very different life. She now happily lives with my mum Carol who adores her new pet. She is very much part of the family and is worshipped by all. So, the moral of the story is that CFRs don't just save people but also adorable doggies too!"

## Lancashire

# This time next year with Davina McCall

After having his own life saved by a volunteer, Chris Ennis, 66, from Ribbles Valley wanted to give something back by becoming a CFR and appeared on hit ITV show, 'This Time Next Year' in February 2019.

Hosted by Davina McCall, the show features ordinary people pledging to transform their lives in extraordinary ways over the course of 12 months. It followed Chris throughout the year where he began training to become a CFR, less than a year after surviving a cardiac arrest whilst playing golf at Clitheroe Golf Club in August 2016.

Chris started breathing again thanks to an amazing team effort from bystanders at the golf club along with a local CFR and ambulance crews. He was taken to hospital where he was given a life-saving heart operation and was back playing golf just six months later. He pledged to become a responder himself.

Chris said: "I am extremely thankful to the CFR who helped save my life; he has inspired me to become a volunteer and now supports me as my team leader now that I respond to emergencies myself."

"I hope that by taking part in this television show, more people realise the benefit of volunteering for the ambulance service and it encourages them to sign up themselves. It's also really important that people know the simple skills they need to help save a life in the event of a cardiac arrest."



## Cumbria

# From carer to CFR to emergency medical technician

Former CFR, Jamie Stott, was 19 when he was doing his day job as a carer and popped to the chemist in his car to get a prescription for one of the residents he was looking after. On his way, he saw a gentleman lying on the floor at the side of the road with somebody giving him CPR, who he soon found out was a doctor.

Jamie says: "I pulled over and offered to help. I only knew the basics but I took over chest compressions whilst the doctor got his defibrillator. The gentleman received four shocks and together we saved his life. He made a full recovery and he's fine now."

"After that experience, I realised I wanted to do more to help the community as it gave me a taste of how I can respond calmly to an emergency situation – and I've never looked back."

Jamie loved his volunteer role so much that we turned him into a character for our campaign to recruit CFRs. Jamie is now training to be an emergency medical technician working in Carlisle and should be successfully qualified by the end of this year.

# Hero next door

Throughout the last 20 years, there have been many campaigns and initiatives designed to boost CFR recruitment across the North West.

Fast forward to 2017 and Hero Next Door was launched. Our award-winning social media campaign is still going strong and is dedicated to recruiting more CFRs to volunteer in their local communities. The idea for the campaign was to let people know that volunteers can go about their everyday lives and have no other connection to healthcare but still find time to be an everyday hero.

We created characters based on real CFRs to give a sense of what being a CFR is really like.



“I joined the CFR team in 2004 and have done extra training to become an enhanced CFR, meaning I can attend a wider range of incidents. I'm retired but carry on my normal day whilst logged on, so I can be in the garden, doing housework or out shopping, it's just a case of being prepared to stop what you're doing and go.”

**Dawn Taylor, Rossendale**



“After helping a man who went into cardiac arrest, who thankfully survived due to the quick intervention of the people around him, I got a taste for emergencies and knew I wanted to be a CFR. I juggle two jobs as well as responding to save lives and be a reassuring face. I love coming home knowing I've made a difference.”

**Jamie Stott, Brampton**



“I have great support from the CFR team in my area and I've made loads of friends within the ambulance service, we're always meeting up! After building my confidence and experience I'm now extremely pleased to have managed to get a place on a paramedic course at university and I'm one step closer to my dream career.”

**Hannah Dootson, Blackpool**



“Volunteering as a CFR allows me to give back to my community and be there for people in their hour of need. I simply sign on when I'm available, whether that be in between appointments at work or when I'm at home watching the telly. The best part for me is after a busy call-out, the relative or patient simply saying 'thank you.'”

**Mark Jarnell, Chorley**



# What does it mean to be a CFR now?

Our community resuscitation managers talk about their roles and why they value CFRs so much.



**David McNally**  
Greater Manchester

“I have been fortunate to work in my role for the last 10 years and during this time, things have changed dramatically and for the good of the community we serve.

“The number of CFRs in our area has grown and currently we have an amazing diverse bunch of people who make themselves available to respond to patients who require emergency care in times of need. My team and I value every responder and between us, we know each one personally. I'm still amazed by the qualities these extraordinary people bring to patients. Their empathy is exceptional.

“We see some of our responders going to extra lengths to make their community safer by delivering basic life support sessions and increasing defibrillator coverage across Greater Manchester. This is additional work to the main role of a CFR but truly shows how they care and want to help people.”



**Rob Hussey**  
Cheshire & Merseyside

“We established CFR teams to deal with out-of-hospital cardiac arrests. Now they do so much more but always remain steadfast as a vital link in the chain of survival. They are often the first person at scene following a 999 call, caring for and providing compassion to their patients and families who are often at their lowest ebb.

“It's often the actions that are undertaken in the first few minutes of an emergency that dictate the outcome. This is where our CFRs truly make a difference within their communities.

“We have brilliant relationships with our CFRs in Cheshire and Merseyside and each and every one of them is dedicated to what they do and what more, they enjoy the voluntary work that they do to help people in their local community.”



**Mark Evans**  
Cumbria & Lancashire

“CFRs are amazing life savers. They are the vital link in in the very first few minutes when a life-threatening medical emergency takes place. They can and do save lives but they do so much more. Their number one priority is always the patients but they are also there to support the families and support NWAS staff in times of emergency. Their calm and caring nature as they walk into the room can make a real difference. The role of CFR has moved on from just responding. Its moved on to education and awareness in local communities and helping to introduce public access defibrillators.

“It's been a privilege and I'm humbled to have been involved with so many volunteers over the last 10 years and enjoy the fantastic partnership that's been built with them. I look forward to working alongside CFRs for many more years to come and can't thank them enough for the tireless work that they do.”

# Here is what you say about being a CFR

We asked some of our CFRs what they love most about their role and what their stand out moment, if they have one, has been. We had hundreds of replies and we'd have liked to have included them all - thank you every one of you who submitted an entry. We hope you enjoy reading them as

## Greater Manchester



**Elizabeth Charnley**  
Eccles

“I'd never heard of the role but knew I wanted to do it as soon as I found out about it. I've been a volunteer for the community since I was nine years old, so to me volunteering is a natural, normal thing to do.

“I went 'live' as a CFR in August 2010 and since then I have progressed to ECFR – a CFR with advanced training so we can attend a broader range of incidents. I can't put into words how it feels to be first on scene to a patient in my community with a life threatening injury or illness. I always get a sense of immediate collective relaxation of everyone present when they know help has arrived.

“I haven't attended many people I know but sometimes being recognised in Eccles, when out shopping or in the library, as the person who has helped that person or a member of their family is nice but a bit embarrassing!

“I'm privileged to be able to be a CFR and whilst it is challenging, it is a voluntary role I am proud to do.

“My stand out moment was attending to a trauma case in Trafford Park soon after qualifying as an ECFR when a heavy box had fallen on a driver's head from his lorry. I was shaking with nerves and terrified but managed to keep control. I have never been so relieved to see the crew including former CFR turned Emergency Medical Technician Scotty who said very nice things about me after the event.”



**Neil Boardman**  
Blackrod

“I became CFR after hearing about the role from a friend. It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done as it is a way for me to give back to society. I find the most rewarding jobs are the ones being with patients who would have been all alone until the ambulance crew arrive if I hadn't attended.

“My stand out moment was the first time I signed on shift; the thought that my pager would go off and I might be all alone attending somebody was pretty scary. Then it happened, my pager flashed with 'resp arrest' and I was only round the corner from the patient. I arrived at the same time as a paramedic and I started resuscitation. The gentlemen pulled though we saved him. I received an email the next day saying how well I did.”



**Phil Mather**  
Sale

“After my retirement from a long and rewarding career in the fire service and having always been involved in volunteering, I was looking for a way to use my life skills which would allow me to give something back to my community. I came across the CFR scheme and I decided to go for it. I completed the training, spent a short time shadowing another volunteers and quickly started responding on my own. It was a little scary at first but the training I received and my career background had prepared me well.

“I have been doing this for about six years and I am now an ECFR as well as an NWAS field trainer which enables me to pass on to others the skills I have gained. Most CFRs can recall times they believe they have made a real difference to a patient's outcome. Most of the time we don't get to find out how the patient is afterwards. We go home believing we have done our best – which I can imagine is the same for ambulance crews. My stand out moment was the first cardiac arrest I attended to. I was first on scene, having taken over from a family member doing CPR and having attached the defibrillator I shocked the lady twice before the arrival of the ambulance crew. I found out some months later that the lady had made a full recovery and returned home to Scotland.”



**Chris Byrne**  
Tameside

“I have been a responder for three and a half years, I do it along my full time job as police deployment supervisor for Greater Manchester Police

“I love being a responder as it gives me an insight into the ambulance service as an organisation who I work closely with day in day out within my full time role. I act as single point of contact between GMP and NWAS and deal with any queries or issues between both services.

“My proudest moment as a CFR was being able to care for an elderly female who had just lost her husband after he suffered a cardiac arrest. The lady was so distressed and upset and I felt I really had made a difference during the worst time of her life. As a CFR it's not just about care for our patients but also for those relatives affected by the incident, it may be just holding their hand, a few words and a cup of tea.

“I can't forget that I met my beautiful fiancée on my initial CFR course so as well as serving my community, it brought me true love. My fiancée Sally Anne is also a CFR.”

## Cheshire & Merseyside



**Victoria Gaffney**  
Sandbach

“I have a background as a paramedic and worked on the British Heart Foundation resuscitation programme for many years. CFRs are valuable to their local communities and I wanted to use the experience I have gained in my work to help my local community and to help make a difference. It's not just the impact on the patient or individual, it's the impact simple actions and kindness can have on a family.

“My training has been amazing and so far has been my stand out moment. I know that, alongside my professional experience will equip me well for responding. I would encourage anybody who wants to help their communities to take up this role.”





**Mike Olley &  
Peter Gregory**  
Rainford

“Without any shadow of doubt the community of Rainford does benefit from the presence of its local CFR team. There are dozens of people walking around today who would not have had that second chance had it not been for the presence of the team and its timely interventions.

“It is not overstating the mark by saying that the team is held in high esteem by all who have come into contact with us; we are well respected and much appreciated for all our efforts.

“We are just happy to be in a position to be able to render that service to our community that after all, is the very reason for our being.”



**Christopher  
Craddock**  
Huyton

“I currently work as an emergency medical dispatcher in the emergency operation centre so I had a little bit of knowledge as to the role of a CFR. Since becoming one, it is totally different to what I had imagined. I didn't realise how much of a difference it makes and how thankful the ambulance crews are when you arrive on scene.

“I became a CFR to help the people in my community who are in desperate need when a loved one becomes unwell. It means a lot to me, knowing that one day I will be the first person on scene to someone who needs my help.

“Since becoming a CFR, my family is very proud of me and even my two youngest children appreciate what I am doing as when I receive a message on my mobile my children now know that I am going to help someone in need. I cannot wait to progress my development within the CFR role as I am really enjoying doing what I am doing.”



**Brandon Leigh**  
Wilmslow

“I qualified as a CFR in early 2019. I applied for the role having been inspired by articles I had read about CFRs and wanting to undertake something new that would invigorate me in my spare time.

“Within weeks of responding, I was first on scene at a cardiac arrest at a house round the corner from home. My training kicked in and before I knew it, I had commenced CPR including delivering two rounds of shocks. The crew and a car arrived and I became part of a team at the house, in the ambulance and at hospital that kept the patient alive.

“Whilst the patient eventually passed away during the night, the next day the family sent their heartfelt thanks that they were able to gather at the bedside in hospital with the patient breathing on their own and say goodbye in a dignified way.

“Since then I have left my day job after 21 years and the CFR role has been extremely valuable in reinforcing my self-worth whilst I recalibrate what I plan to do on a day to day basis. I already feel part of a new family in terms of my fellow CFRs, support staff and crews and I hope to continue with this rewarding role for many years to come.”

# Cumbria & Lancashire



**Megan Stephenson**  
Workington

“I’m proud to be a CFR and really enjoy interacting and supporting my local community and ambulance service. I have found over the two years I have been responding that the respect and gratitude from diverse members of public is outstanding.

“I trained to become a CFR after my grandad suffered a cardiac arrest at Preston Railway Station. A member of the public who had ties to community first responding used a defibrillator located in the train station. My grandad was taken to hospital where we were able to say our goodbyes. Unfortunately he did pass but we were able to say our goodbyes due to that member of public.

“My stand out moment has to be when I recently sought funding for a community public access defibrillator unit for the Carnegie Theatre in Workington. I delivered CPR and defibrillator training shortly after installation to members of public and staff. Shortly after, an attendee of the theatre had to put these new skills to the test and used the defibrillator to successfully resuscitate a local man.”



**Kristian Spiers**  
Barrow

“Three years ago I had no idea what a CFR was or that the initiative even existed, but one day whilst driving I noted someone running from a house with a bright yellow jacket, bright yellow and green bag and a defibrillator. I asked my passenger who that was and what they did, from there I knew what a CFR was and that I had to become one.

“I consider it a privilege that the ambulance service trains me in the skills that I have and that any member of the public invites me into the home and entrusts me with their or their family’s care. I do this role because I enjoy helping others and it means I meet all kinds of people and for a few minutes learn something about them.”



**Ken Shaxton**  
Blackburn

“Being a CFR is a very rewarding position and I am proud to do what I do in my local community. I volunteer to do this job because I feel that I’m giving something back to my community and that I am giving them my very best attention and care. On many occasions I have been given praise for helping my local community which gives me an overwhelming sense that I am doing something worthwhile.

“My stand out moment was when an elderly lady fell down the escalators within a shopping mall. She was badly injured and we attended to her cuts whilst we waited for the ambulance to arrive. As the lady was taken onto the ambulance, she held my hand and said, “thank you young man” and gave me a warming smile. The lady made my day with her witty comments and smile. This now makes me committed to being the best CFR for Blackburn that I can be.”

# CFR facts

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We have 870 CFRs in operation across the North West.

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From April 2018 to April 2019 CFRs across the North West were sent to 13,841 people in need of medical intervention.

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In June 2010, we introduced a dedicated communication centre to co-ordinate CFR activity across the region. The dedicated CFR desk is based at Broughton Emergency Control Centre and coordinates all CFR activity.

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In winter 2010, we launched our extended community first responder (ECFR) programme which enabled CFRs to learn enhanced skills to be able attend a broader range of emergency calls. To date we have 194 ECFRs across the North West.

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We took a team of CFRs and staff to the House of Commons in January 2015 to campaign for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to be compulsory on the national curriculum and for a legal requirement for defibrillators to be installed in public places, like fire extinguishers.

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In July 2018, the government revealed plans to add CPR to the national curriculum – result!

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In February 2013, we launched our CardiacSmart initiative which recognises and rewards communities and organisations that promote awareness of heart health, and take measures to ensure victims of cardiac arrest get the best possible out-of-hospital care. The scheme is undergoing a revamp and is soon to be relaunched - watch this space.

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We held our very first annual CFR conference on Saturday 26 March 2011 at Lancaster University which was attended by over 200 CFRs.

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CFRs do not attend incidents which involve children under the age of 12, road traffic collisions or trauma. A CFR will never be knowingly sent in to a hostile or unsafe environment.

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In 2004, all CFRs were given training in the use of oxygen, this extended the treatment they could offer to patients and in turn providing the possibility of a better

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outcome. Today CFRs still attend the same type of calls along with falls, bleeding and diabetic.

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An important part of CFR training is how to offer tender loving care (TLC) to patient and relatives. No one can really quantify what effect being reassuring and calming in an emergency situation has on the health of the patient - it is invaluable.

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Active CFRs volunteering in 1999 were trained in basic life support (BLS) and in the use of the automated external defibrillator (AED). Attending such calls as chest pains, cardiac arrest, fitting, choking, and difficulty in breathing, collapse and unconscious patient.

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We have approximately 50 former CFRs who went on to become EMTs and paramedics.

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Silloth CFR team in Cumbria still receive a Christmas card and donation from a gentleman called David who they resuscitated in 2001 which happened to be the team's second successful outcome after they were formed!



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