



PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST RESPONSE

An introduction for volunteers

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PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST RESPONSE

This booklet outlines the basic principles and procedures that a Psychological First Aider should follow in event of a major incident. Please take some time to study the contents of the booklet so that you better understand what is required of you.

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID AND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST RESPONDERS?

PFA is humane, supportive and practical assistance to fellow human beings who are suffering from a highly stressful situation.

PFA should not be confused with the kind of therapy or counselling that only fully trained professionals are capable of providing.

In the event of a major incident, psychological first responders will be expected to attend a Psychological Reception Centre, established at short notice for those affected by the incident to attend. Upon reaching this location, you will provide human contact, emotional comfort and practical help to those most in need.

Psychological First Aid and *Psychological First Response* are terms that may be used interchangeably. There is no meaningful difference between the terms. Similarly, the words *Volunteer* and *Helper* are used interchangeably, as are the words *Crisis* and *Incident*.

YOUR PERSONAL REACTION

As a volunteer you too can be affected by what you see and hear. In order to work safely and effectively, you need to be aware of how you are managing the stress of the crisis. If you are overwhelmed and need to take time out, please ensure that you do this.

IN THE EVENT OF AN INCIDENT

- You will receive a standby WhatsApp message from CST with the nature of the incident. No action is needed from you at this stage – but you may well wish to prepare yourself for possible involvement due to your role.
- A Psychological Reception Centre will be quickly established by the relevant authorities.
- You will receive a mobilisation WhatsApp message, informing you of the Reception Centre and requesting your attendance as soon as possible.
- Upon arrival, you will sign in and be given address cards and information cards for your interactions with those seeking psychological help at the Centre.
- Psychological Response Team (PRT) therapists will be on site for any questions and for triaging people who you feel need additional help.
- Whenever you leave the Centre, you must sign out and ensure that the information cards are correctly handed over.
- You may be asked to follow up a week later with telephone calls to those affected.
- You will be contacted by the team leaders to arrange a debrief and meeting to reflect upon your experiences.

DISTRESS REACTIONS YOU MAY WITNESS

- Physical symptoms (headaches, loss of appetite, shaking, fatigue, nausea, aches and pains)
- Anxiety, fear
- Weeping, grief & sadness
- Guilt, shame (for having survived, or for not saving others)
- Elation for having survived
- Being hyper-vigilant, jumpy
- Anger, irritability
- Immobility and being withdrawn
- Being disoriented, not knowing one's name, where one is, what has happened

- Not responding to others, not speaking at all
- Feeling confused, emotionally numb, unreal or in a daze
- Not being able to do things for self/children, not being able to make simple decisions

GOOD COMMUNICATIONS

- Introduce yourself and say where you are from:
"I am David. I am a trained volunteer with the Community Security Trust. How can I best help you?"
- Say only what you know – don't make up information
- Keep messages simple and accurate. If necessary, repeat. For example:
"You are safe now"
- If you are giving information, explain where it comes from and how reliable it is
- Let people know when/where you will update them
- Say goodbye when you have finished your intervention





PREPARE, LOOK, LISTEN, LINK

The actions of responders can be summarised under four simple headings: PREPARE, LOOK, LISTEN and LINK.



CST WILL PROVIDE ANY CONFIRMED INFORMATION WE HAVE.

You can also try and learn in advance both from open sources and those receiving you at the CST Reception Centre about:

THE CRISIS EVENT

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- How many people have been affected?
- Who has been affected?

AVAILABLE SERVICES

- Who is providing emergency needs?
- Who is helping, including community members?

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Is the incident still ongoing?
- Are there any areas which are either unsafe or inaccessible?



- Crisis situations can change rapidly and it may be difficult to obtain accurate information
- What you learn beforehand may be different from what you experience when you arrive at the Reception Centre
- It is therefore important to take time to LOOK around to assess the situation before deciding who to help

When you enter the Psychological Reception Centre, you need to LOOK at the situation that presents itself and act accordingly, going to help those in most need.

KEY ACTIONS

- Observe for safety. Is there somebody who is self-harming or threatening others?
- Observe for people with serious psychological distress reactions
- Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs, such as requiring information, or food, water, a telephone, a power point etc

LISTEN



KEY ACTIONS

- Make contact with people who may need support
- Ask about people's needs and concerns
- Listen to people and help them feel calm

- Talk less, listen more
- Be patient and calm – don't rush people or interrupt
- Show that you are listening respectfully by maintaining good eye contact, nodding, and making positive sounds, for example, 'um-hmm' and use a soothing voice
- If you don't know, say so:
"I don't know, but will try and find out for you"
- Be compassionate: acknowledge how they are feeling, including the most serious matters, such as the death of a loved one:
"I'm so sorry: I can't begin to imagine how difficult / distressing that must be for you"
- Never say, "I know how you feel"



What can you do to now give people a basis from which to move forward?

KEY ACTIONS

- Help people obtain basic needs and access services (GP, CST information line)
- Help people cope with problems and prioritise what they need to do
- Give information
- Connect people with loved ones, social support, religious support

IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS

CST Emergency Support information
www.cst.org.uk/emergency-assistance


CST's Psychological Support Helpline **0800 032 8477**





ACT NOW DON'T IGNORE IT!

REPORT suspicious activity and antisemitism to the Police:
In an emergency **999**, in a non-emergency **101**
THEN CALL CST, 0800 032 3263

 National Emergency Number (24-hour) **0800 032 3263**
London (Head Office) **020 8457 9999**
Manchester (Northern Regional Office) **0161 792 6666**

 www.cst.org.uk

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