

YOUR COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDERS

When you are faced with a medical emergency, there appears to be some misunderstanding as to how to proceed in the best interests of the patient. Many people will be aware that there are **Community First Responders** (CFRs) in the area who may be able to assist but it must be understood how they operate and their limitations. CFRs are not permitted to attend emergencies without activation by their overseeing organisation, which in this area is the Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

On encountering a medical emergency it is essential to phone 999 if the patient is at risk or needing treatment. If an ambulance is deemed necessary a decision will rapidly be made as to whether it is within the scope of a CFR and whether one is available locally. It is not unusual for a CFR to arrive before the caller has put the phone down.

CFRs are volunteers and should not be considered as on duty 24/7. They have undergone training for a limited range of conditions and undergo regular updates and recertification. They are generally restricted to heart attacks, strokes, breathing difficulty, collapse, chest pains, fits, falls or any condition that the ambulance service dispatcher considers is within their trained remit. They will not normally deal with injuries or accidents unless suspected as a result of other conditions. Kit carried includes oxygen, defibrillator and monitoring devices for temperature, pulse, oxygen and blood pressure.

CFRs can assess, monitor and reassure patients and in some cases keep the patient alive till the ambulance and paramedics arrive. If the patient is assessed to be declining to a concerning degree the CFR can feed back the information to escalate the ambulance priority if deemed appropriate. Ambulances are generally prioritised for the most critical cases and may not come on a “first come first served” basis.

Whether or not a CFR is available, the 999 receiver, if appropriate to the symptoms, may advise that a public defibrillator can be accessed locally (Buckden Village Institute and barn at West Farm at Beckermonds) and supply the access code to the locked cabinet. Get help where possible to bring this while following the advice over the phone. Switching a mobile to speakerphone is useful.

KEY POINT: First ring 999 – the Ambulance Service will advise on how to proceed and whether an ambulance is necessary.

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