



# Becoming a Community First Responder, What to Expect





## Overview

Welcome to South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB) and thank you for showing an interest in joining us as a Community First Responder (CFR). Our Trust covers a large geographical area serving a resident population of close to five million in Sussex, Surrey, Kent, and Northeast Hampshire.

SECAMB currently has more than 300 volunteer CFRs. The Trust answers close to a million 999 calls each year and our CFRs are tasked to more than 20,000 emergency calls a year, making a difference to local communities and saving lives.

Some 10,000 of these calls are classed as category one, immediately life-threatening calls. The following are an example of the type of call a CFR would attend;

- Cardiac/Respiratory Arrest
- Choking Patient
- Chest Pain/Cardiac Problems
- Stroke
- Unconscious patient
- Allergic Reaction
- Bleeding
- Fitting



If you are over 18 years old, hold a valid UK driving licence and are a person who enjoys working as part of a team, has a car and can remain calm under pressure a role as a CFR could be for you.

There is no upper age limit to becoming a volunteer, and we don't expect you to have any medical background. However, you must be physically fit to carry out the demands of the role. You will be taught the same skills as our current CFRs and will get a tremendous amount of pride from giving back to your community.

As a CFR you are not a substitute for an ambulance response. You will always be backed up by a fully trained ambulance crew.

## No two days will be the same

We are looking for people from all backgrounds to join us. We're looking for people who are trustworthy, respectful and share the same values as the Trust.

If you have these qualities, you will receive the best training to prepare you for your CFR role and in addition you will receive the following benefits including.

- Access to our wellbeing Hub
- 24/7 Chaplaincy Support (for all faiths and those of non-faith)
- Access to NHS Discounts
- Access to the Blue Light Discount Card
- Access to Trust Office 365

## Training and Support

We will train you for one of the most varied and interesting volunteer roles available. You will gain a wealth of skills, confidence and experience dealing with emergencies and social care.



As a CFR, SECAmb will invest in training you to a national standard with a recognised qualification, provide you with uniform and pay your out-of-pocket expenses.

In return we ask for a minimum 20 hours of volunteering time per month (four hours per week, or 60 hours in three months). This is critical to maintain your competence and confidence to carry out the role. The course you will complete is the Future Qual First Responders on Scene (FROS). This will give you a Level 3 qualification and set you up for your CFR journey. The course is usually run over two weekends with key milestones to be completed by way of assessment and exams. If successful you will be issued with your uniform and first response kit, including an ID card and mobile phone. You can find more out about the course by clicking [here](#)

Don't worry! We do not throw you in at the deep end. You will be passed to your team to complete some mentorship and supervision. This will be patient facing but with an experienced CFR who can guide you and help you find your feet, and ensure you are ready to volunteer alone.

## Support and Guidance

As part of being a volunteer, you will be asked to sign a volunteer agreement that details what you will do for us by way of volunteering, i.e. completing your four hours each week and what we will do to support you.

Each CFR Team has a Senior Team Leader and Team Leader who will support you. The Community Resilience Team have several staff (Community Resilience Leads) who will support you and wider teams.

There is an expectation that you will complete statutory and mandatory training yearly. This is a legal requirement for the SECAmb. CFRs who do not complete the training by the given deadline have to be stood down from responding until it is completed. This is to protect the both the CFR and our patients.

The Statutory and Mandatory training can consist of the some of the modules and is all completed online.

- Safeguarding Adults
- Safeguarding Children
- Fire Safety
- Manual Handling
- Information Governance
- Infection Control
- Emergency Preparedness
- Health, Safety and Risk

There will also be a practical assessment on Basic life support for adults and children that needs to be completed and passed yearly.

We will also expect you to act in a professional way always upholding the values of the Trust. (These can be found on our website). [www.secamb.nhs.uk](http://www.secamb.nhs.uk)



## Applying and being accepted

Once you have decided you are able to commit to the hours and training you can apply using our online application form. It is an easy process and is fully automated. If you meet

the criteria in the role brief you will be invited for interview and if successful, be offered a course date. Remember; be as detailed as you can in your application form as this will ensure a timelier process.

Once you have been offered a course date there is a requirement for you to undertake some online statutory and mandatory training modules prior to starting the course. This will ensure you are prepared for the course and ready to undertake mentorship once the course is completed. Unfortunately, if the online training is not completed in time, you will not be able to complete the course. If you have circumstances outside of your control, you should speak to a member of the training team.

Due to the role and the responsibility, you will have, there is a requirement for you to have an Enhanced DBS clearance. Again, this will be required prior to completing the course.

## Life as a Community First Responder

No two days are the same as a CFR. Our CFRs come from all walks of life. Becoming a CFR will be an experience that will enrich your life. You will make a difference to your local communities and the public you serve.

### A typical shift

No two shifts will be the same. One day you could be responding to a cardiac arrest, another to a heart attack or stroke. However, you will make a difference to every patient you attend by the treatment you provide and the compassion you show.

### Where will you be based?

CFRs are usually affiliated at their closest Make Ready Centre or ambulance station. These can be found on our website. You will belong to part of a team and will meet regularly to train and share experiences. In some areas we collaboratively work with our fire and rescue services for training.

### Uniform

As a CFR you will be expected to wear a uniform that is provided for you along with any personal protective equipment you require to carry out your role safely. This will include communication devices and medical equipment.

### Insurance

As a CFR you are insured under the NHS Litigation Authority and covered while on duty.



## Meet some of our CFRs

### Dave Nelson: Senior Team Leader

#### What made you decide to become a CFR and volunteer your time?

I became a CFR when I saw an advert for the role when I lived in Horsham. The scheme was just starting up and had advertised for new volunteers. At the time I was working and volunteering in event first aid and emergency response for the British Red Cross where essentially you wait for your patient to come to you when something occurs at the fete or festival you were at. I had the skills, or so I thought at the time, to assist but quickly started to learn the skills to “walk in the door” of the patient having been used in the past for them mostly walking up to you.



#### Years of Service

15 Years

#### What would you say your role was like on a day-to-day basis?

I have been a CFR since 2007 and a senior team leader for seven years. My senior role is to support the team leaders in my area and be a person they can call for advice and support and this is key for me. I do still attend to patients and while I now work for the Trust in Emergency Preparedness, I am able to still meet patients and support them until my Trust colleagues attend just as any other CFR does.

#### What are the biggest challenges being a CFR?

As I live slightly more rurally than some, I do find that this brings some challenges in locating properties especially in the dark but local knowledge and experience does help. As I do work for the Trust the other challenge I have is holding in the pride and admiration when I hear our crews talking about the local CFR's and the contribution they make. It is so pleasing to hear and often as they don't know that I am one of the CFRs too!

### Leigh Westwood: Senior Team Leader

#### What skills have you learnt from being a CFR Senior Team Leader?

Having started as a CFR, progressed through Team Leader and then to Senior Team Leader, alongside the skills required for the frontline role I have developed the necessary skills to be the point of contact between Team Leaders and Community Resilience. Core to this is communication and understanding that all the CFRs and CFR Team Leaders have different backgrounds, differing challenges and needs in order to undertake this vital role they give their own time to perform. Mapping all these together to maximise the performance of teams and individuals is a skill that is always evolving and in which you learn more each day.



#### What is most rewarding about your role?

People, first and foremost. Whether it is a patient you are attending in their hour of need who needs that reassurance, or a colleague on your team giving up their own time to be involved, the most rewarding part is seeing that you are making a difference to that person in that interaction. On a wider scale, it is the recognition and support from the local community, as this makes you feel valued for the time you give towards serving them.





### What would you say to someone who is considering joining?

This is an extremely important role and could contribute to making a huge difference in your community. Alongside the frontline responding, there is training to be undertaken regularly and time needed to support, develop, and fundraise at a team level. It does take commitment and it does require you to be fully engaged in all aspects of the role. That may sound more demanding than you had expected but imagine giving your time in your community and saving someone's life and the difference you will have just made to someone else's family. If you are looking for a volunteer role that is flexible, sometimes challenging and yet extremely rewarding, then becoming a Community First Responder in your local community is the perfect way you can give something back.

## Rachael Curtis: CFR

### How long have you been a CFR?

Six years

### What made you become a CFR?

I happened to be watching an ambulance programme, where Angela Griffin joined local ambulance crews. At one particular call, she questioned a gentleman about who he was and why he was there. He told her that he was a Community First Responder and a volunteer. She couldn't believe that anyone would give up their time to help in such a way!

This must have had an impact on me, as some time later, I asked my GP about the role, and whether he felt I could take it on [assuming that there were CFRs in my local area]. He advised me to contact Secamb directly, which I did, via the website. The rest, they say, is history!



It was a decision which I have never regretted. I love being able to make a small difference to both patients and to assist the ever-stretched ambulance service.

### How does a CFR benefit their community?

In the area where we live, the Hoo Peninsula, the service which our team provides is absolutely critical to the local community. Our location means that it can often be 20 minutes or longer, before an ambulance arrives. We are trained to respond to emergency calls which come through the 999 system, and as such can make a difference by being on scene quickly to both assess and care for patients who are in need of assistance.

We also play a fundamental, but critical, role during cardiac arrests. In these cases, speed of response is absolutely vital, and being located in the community and having access to the appropriate equipment, means we can ensure that critical treatment is started, prior to the arrival of the ambulance response team.

With the ever-growing population on the Peninsula, it is vital that we continue to grow the CFR community to ensure the best emergency cover is provided at all times.

### Would you recommend the role of a CFR to friends and family and if so, why?

Yes, definitely. This is a role which would appeal to anyone who wishes to support their local community. I have been extremely lucky in that my local community supported me when I



arrived here 23 years ago. I vowed to give something back to that same community when able to do so. This role is unbelievably rewarding, and although my family think I am completely mad, I know they are extremely proud of what I do!

## Carol Lewis: CFR

### How long have you been a CFR?

I've been a CFR for almost 10 and half years now.

### What made you become a CFR?

I decided to become a CFR as working in the ambulance service Emergency Operations Centre, I could see that Faversham only had one CFR that responded and thought I'd like to help make a difference.



### How has becoming a CFR benefited your local community?

Being a CFR in our town has helped benefit many families, just by being on scene as quick as I am, is really reassuring to the families. Also, I have saved and help save numerous lives in our community.

### Would you recommend becoming a CFR to family and Friends?

I would 100% recommend becoming a CFR to my friends and family, the first time you get a Return of Spontaneous Circulation from a cardiac arrest, I cannot explain how amazing it feels.