

Preparing for a pandemic



Photo: ©Layton Thompson

As a leading emergency response organisation, the British Red Cross is developing plans to ensure it can support the health and emergency services in the event of a flu pandemic.

In February, the Red Cross took part in a Department of Health-led exercise entitled Winter Willow, aimed at testing how well the country would respond to a pandemic.

Margaret Lally, British Red Cross director of UK service development, said: "We really appreciated being involved as it highlighted a number of lessons for us in how we work with our statutory partners and the need to clarify our role. In particular we realised the need for greater flexibility in everyone's plans."

Ms Lally outlined a number of ways the Red Cross could provide support to the statutory agencies:

- > its care in the home services could supplement social services if they were short of staff, for instance, ensuring vulnerable people received their shopping

- > it could deliver anti-virals to ill people in the community
- > it could help run telephone support lines.

"The British Red Cross would also be in a position to work with more vulnerable groups who might not be able to access healthcare, such as asylum seekers," Ms Lally said.

"In the event of a pandemic we would expect to suspend some of our services that are less essential in an emergency. But we will discuss this with our staff and volunteers throughout the UK. The key is that we work with our local partners to see what the need is locally."

The Red Cross is also trying to ensure that there is greater involvement of the voluntary sector, and recently facilitated a meeting of the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum to discuss pandemic plans with the Department of Health.

For more information please contact Corinne Evans, public affairs adviser, on 020 7877 7051, at corinneevans@redcross.org.uk or visit redcross.org.uk

Lessons for life-savers

The *Life. Live it.* first aid education pack for teachers has been launched across the country – making it easier for young people to learn life-saving skills.

The Red Cross would like to see first aid taught in all schools in the UK, and the new kit makes this aim more achievable. The resource has been specially designed to allow teachers without specialist knowledge of first aid to teach basic life-saving techniques.

The kit is for educators working with 11-14 year olds in UK schools, and includes an interactive CD ROM with step-by-step guidance and video clips of all the key techniques. The resource works particularly well in subjects dealing with personal health and social issues.

We believe it is particularly important for young people to learn first aid skills. Many young people take on more responsibility in their teenage years, such as babysitting and learning how to drive. Some young people also experiment with alcohol or drugs. Part of the transition to adulthood should include learning what to do if things go wrong.

Joe Mulligan, head of first aid at the British Red Cross, said: “We want to enable schools to teach first aid. The basics can be easily taught and don’t take young people long to learn. That’s why we’ve produced a resource that is flexible and includes step-by-step guidance for those without in-depth knowledge of the subject.

“On average three million people attend A&E with injuries that could have been helped with first aid. We know simple skills such as knowing how to open an airway or control a bleed can be vital after an accident or injury.”

An online forum is being hosted by the Red Cross and Yahoo Groups to enable educators delivering first aid education to share tips and best practice. The Red Cross is also running a forum for students, moderated by other young people, to allow them to discuss their experiences of learning and using first aid.

Additional information about our *Life. Live it.* campaign and the first aid forum can be found at redcross.org.uk/lifeliveit



A winning partnership



Photo: © Layton Thompson

The British Red Cross aims to raise more than £2 million for its work in the UK after being selected as Tesco Charity of the Year 2007.

The theme of the partnership is 'Crisis care in your neighbourhood' and the money each Tesco store raises will be spent locally on British Red Cross services, including:

- > **Care in the home services**
Red Cross volunteers providing short-term care in the home for people after an accident or illness
- > **Life-changing emergency equipment**
Ranging from wheelchairs to ambulances, to help people in crisis situations such as accidents, illness, fire and flood
- > **Life-saving skills**
Providing vulnerable people with first aid skills.

Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of the population rate good neighbours and community spirit over proximity to good schools, shops and transport links as the most important factor when buying a new house, according to research commissioned by the British Red Cross.

Despite this, the YouGov research found only a quarter of those polled felt they could go to their neighbour when in a personal crisis.

Sir Nicholas Young, British Red Cross chief executive, said: "This is exactly where the Red Cross steps in – we're there to ensure that no-one need face a crisis alone. Our partnership with Tesco will enable the British Red Cross to expand its reach and develop its UK services. This will ensure the Red Cross can help more vulnerable people in crisis in local neighbourhoods across the country."

News in brief

Falling for the Red Cross

On Saturday 12 May, the Brit Chicks skydiving team will be attempting to break a British record and raise the profile of Red Cross Appeal Week (6-12 May).

The 72 women, dressed in identical red jumpsuits, will jump out of three planes 18,000 feet over Langar airfield, Nottinghamshire to form the shape of a giant red cross, which will be visible right across the city.

By linking together to form our iconic emblem, the skydivers will embody our aim of mobilising the power of humanity to raise funds for the Red Cross.

During the week, thousands of Red Cross volunteers will take to the streets to raise vital funds for our life-saving work in the UK and overseas.

Last year, our volunteers raised nearly £1 million in the week. That money has helped us respond to emergencies at home and abroad – from flooding in Scotland to conflict in the Middle East.



Photo: © Andy Yennun

Homes for tsunami survivors

Nearly 400 families affected by the 2004 tsunami have moved into new houses built by the British Red Cross in Indonesia and the Maldives.

A further 1,058 houses are under construction as efforts continue to complete 2,450 homes as part of the tsunami programme. In Indonesia the houses have been completed in Peukan Bada and the nearby island of Pulo Aceh, and are being built in the Aceh Jaya area, which was devastated by the tsunami.

The British Red Cross is building houses on five islands in the Maldives. The organisation is also giving financial support to fishermen, farmers, traders and women across Indonesia, the Maldives and Sri Lanka to help restart their businesses or become self-sufficient.

James McAvoy helps highlight Uganda crisis



Photo: © Jenny Matthews

Scottish actor James McAvoy has returned to Uganda, where he was recently filming, to see projects supported by the British Red Cross in the conflict-torn north. James travelled to camps for internally displaced people, where 1.7 million people have been forced to flee their homes during 20 years of brutal civil war.

The *Last King of Scotland* actor saw for himself the life-saving work being carried out by the Ugandan Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross.

“It’s amazing to think that some of the people I met have been in these camps for five, ten, sometimes even 15 years,” he said.

“The conditions in the camps were awful and it’s horrific to think this has been going on for so long and that so few people actually know about it. The Red Cross is providing essential support to those in the camps and also to those who are starting to return home.”

With the support of the British Red Cross, thousands of those displaced have received water, sanitation, seeds, tools and other life-saving relief.

The British Red Cross has been supporting the Ugandan Red Cross, which has provided assistance to more than 734,000 people in the north since 2002.

Harriet Atim, from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, praised the efforts of the Red Cross.

“Red Cross assistance has been vital in the camps, particularly in the area of water and sanitation. They have also provided seeds, tools and household items, but the need is so great that distributions could be doubled.”

Fund to assist victims of terrorist attacks abroad

The British Red Cross last month announced a charitable fund to assist UK residents who are the victims of terrorist attacks overseas. The Red Cross has established the fund at the request of the government, which has donated £1m to it.

The British Red Cross Relief Fund for UK Victims of Terrorism Overseas will provide financial assistance to people who have been seriously injured or bereaved. Charitable grants of £15,000 will be available to help people deal with the immediate financial difficulties they may experience following a terrorist incident. The payments are not intended to be compensation for what victims have suffered.

Margaret Lally, director of UK service development at the British Red Cross, said: “We know from our experience that people may face financial difficulties after a terrorist incident. Many people will not be

covered by travel insurance in these circumstances. These charitable grants are not compensation, but help alleviate the sudden and unforeseen expenses they may incur.”

For the last two years, the Red Cross and the UK government have been working closely to improve the support that is given to Britons who are affected by emergencies overseas, including terrorist incidents. As part of this, Red Cross support workers now travel as part of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) rapid deployment teams to provide practical and emotional support to Britons who have been affected.

In this role the Red Cross helped UK residents affected by the bomb explosions in Turkey and in Dahab, Egypt in April last year. In March, support workers also provided assistance to the families of the UK citizens kidnapped in Ethiopia.