



British Red Cross
Caring for people in crisis

October
2003



Volunteer, staff and delegate charter



Why the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement exists

The British Red Cross is part of the world's largest humanitarian movement. Like other voluntary organisations, we are an integral part of health and social care provision in the UK and overseas, supporting people and communities coping with crisis. From this we gain our charitable status.

But the Movement is, in many respects, unique:

- We operate and cooperate worldwide, mobilising “the power of humanity” through our network of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to help the world's most vulnerable people
- Our work and our values are underpinned, uniquely, by seven fundamental principles, which guide our individual and collective actions:

- humanity
- impartiality
- neutrality
- independence
- voluntary service
- Unity
- Universality.

- Our work is not limited to service provision. We have a special role to play in promoting humanitarianism, in developing understanding of and respect for the Geneva Conventions and other aspects of international humanitarian law, and in promoting cooperation and peace-building initiatives.

The Movement has a worldwide reputation for the provision of high-quality service – a reputation which has been earned through the strengths and diversity of our people.

Who we need to help us

To maintain our reputation and continue to build our capacity to deliver service, the British Red Cross needs people from all walks of life, all communities, who can bring their different skills and experiences to our essential work. As volunteers, as professional staff, as international delegates (the term used for overseas staff) and as supporters, we need a wide range of people who can commit themselves to our humanitarian cause.

Why we need volunteers, staff and delegates

We can only achieve our goals – in delivering services, in raising funds, in managing our resources – through skilled and committed volunteers, staff and delegates.

Volunteers

We have a long history of volunteering which we are committed to maintaining, because:

- service participants place special value on the care which skilled and trained volunteers can give – care given willingly, in their own time, without expectation of material reward
- volunteers enable us to draw on a very wide pool of skills, derived from professional and personal experience, which enriches the services we offer
- volunteers provide an invaluable insight into the needs of the communities in which they live, thus better informing our work.

Professional staff

Our volunteers work together with paid professional staff, whose contributions are also needed, because:

- as a major charity accountable to all our donors, we must meet the expectation that our resources are carefully managed and our legal responsibilities met, through a core of qualified professionals



- in order to ensure our work is designed and organised as effectively as possible, we need the continuity and expertise that skilled, committed staff can provide
- our volunteers and delegates have the right to expect the support and development that trained staff can provide.

Delegates

We second high-quality delegates to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to work in overseas disaster relief and development, because:

- the provision of goods and funds alone is not enough – the Federation and ICRC need the very specialist skills and commitment of our delegates to meet the needs of vulnerable people around the world, at times of natural or man-made disaster, and in times of conflict
- sister National Societies work with and through our delegates to develop local capacity to deal with crises
- specially trained delegates are needed to carry out the core work of the ICRC, offering protection to detainees and displaced people, and spreading knowledge of the principles of international humanitarian law.



**Teamwork: volunteers,
staff and delegates meet
crisis needs and promote
humanitarian values**

Pulling together

The contribution of all our volunteers, staff and delegates is highly valued. Working in partnership, they constitute the main strength of the organisation. In different operational contexts, the balance of volunteers, staff and delegates implementing our work will change, according to what best meets the needs of service recipients. This flexibility helps us focus resources where they are most needed in the most appropriate way.

What you can expect from us

All those who work with us, in whatever capacity, can expect to enter into a partnership which has at its core a clear commitment to providing the highest-quality service to vulnerable people. We therefore have high expectations of our volunteers, staff and delegates, who in turn have high expectations of the British Red Cross.

So, what does this partnership mean in practice? It means everyone can expect to:

- be valued and respected by all those in the organisation
- have their individual contribution and efforts appropriately recognised and rewarded
- feel part of a team that makes a difference to people's lives
- be provided with opportunities to expand their skills and experience
- receive support when needed
- have the opportunity to contribute to the future direction of the organisation
- have access to channels and networks that allow their voice to be heard
- receive appropriate resources to carry out their roles.

While there may be distinctive differences between volunteers, staff and delegates, which must be respected, and which will be reflected in the different arrangements the Society enters into with each group the concept of working in partnership binds the distinctive groups together, and the Society commits to meeting the expectations described above.

What we expect from you

Our service recipients, our donors and our supporters have the right to expect the highest standards from the British Red Cross. Therefore, we expect our volunteers, staff and delegates to:

- demonstrate commitment to the seven fundamental principles in their everyday behaviour
- work within our equal opportunities policy
- recognise the needs of our service recipients as our primary concern
- work to the highest standard, giving the best of their skills and abilities
- work in a positive and inclusive way with everyone they come into contact with
- be accountable for their actions, within a supportive environment
- take part in appropriate and relevant training and development activities.

Everyone who contributes to the work of the British Red Cross gives of himself or herself to a humanitarian cause. This deserves and receives respect.