



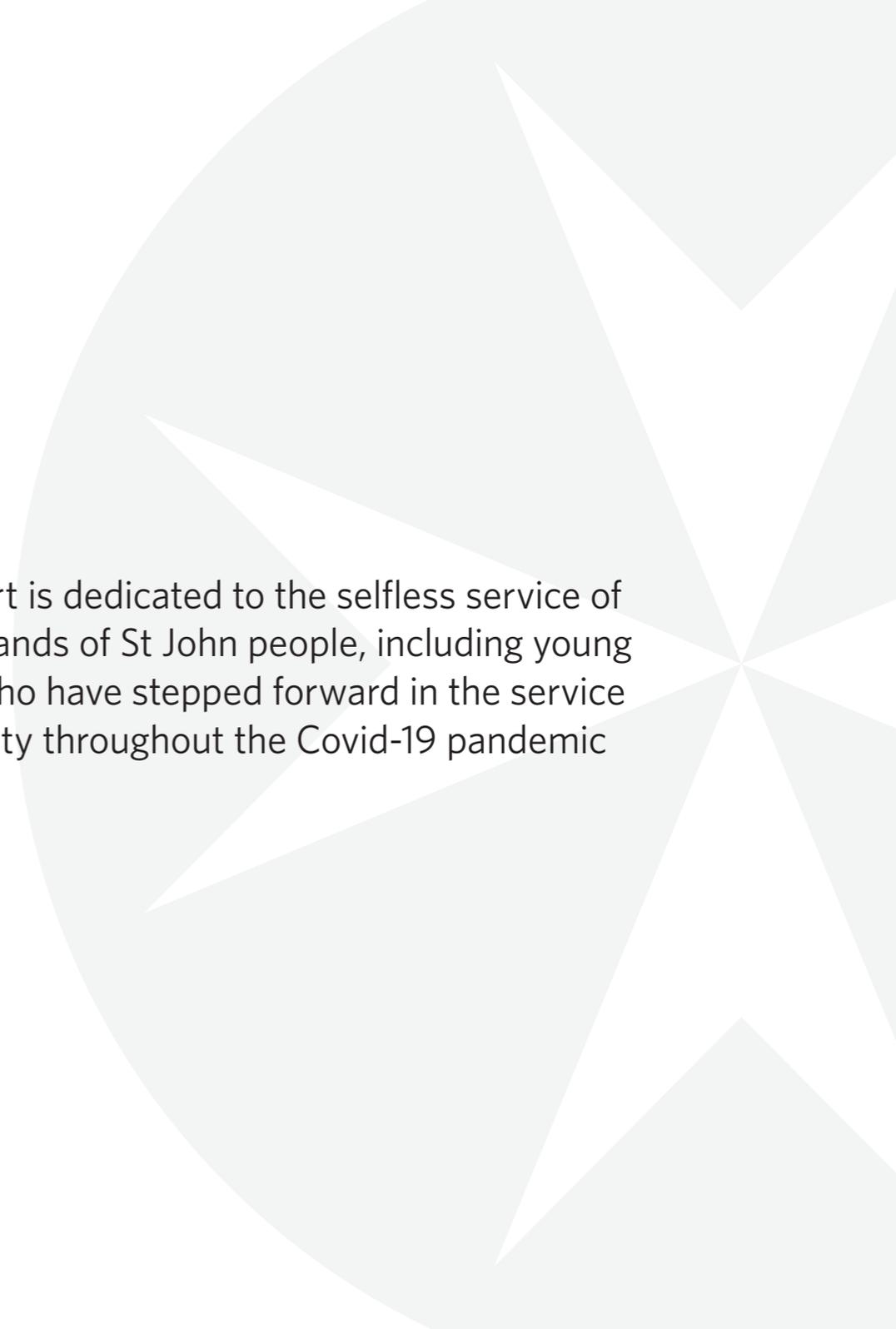
**St John**  
Ambulance



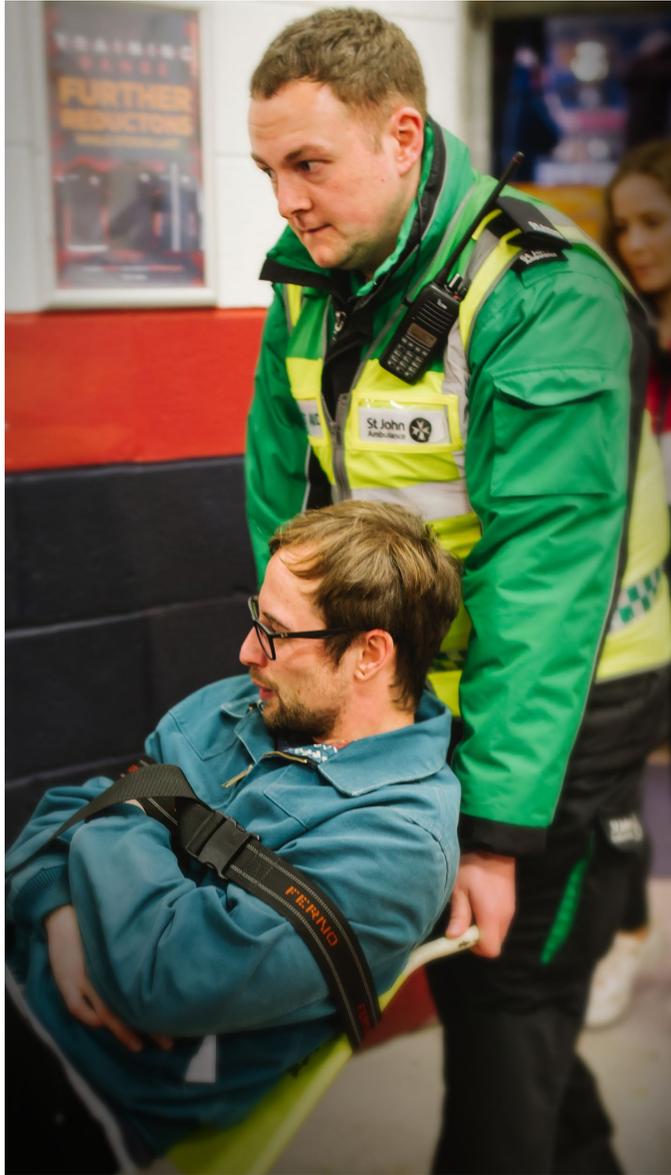


# **Ask us about** **our million hours**

St John people on their million hours of pandemic service to the nation and how we build a lasting legacy of emergency resilience



This report is dedicated to the selfless service of the thousands of St John people, including young people, who have stepped forward in the service of humanity throughout the Covid-19 pandemic



## Foreword

The past 18 months have shown how truly the clinically skilled volunteers and dedicated staff of St John Ambulance have lived our founding motto - "in the service of humanity" - as they've stepped forward to serve the nation in the biggest peacetime deployment of our 140-year history.

Our volunteers have given over 1 million hours of service during the Covid-19 pandemic, stepping forward time and time again as highly trained, clinically skilled volunteers able to work as ambulance crew, in hospital emergency departments and now within the vaccination programme.

This report documents the incredible sacrifice made by our brilliant volunteers and highlights some of their amazing stories. But a short report could never include stories of all the thousands of volunteers and staff who have all stepped forward day in day out to support the NHS and communities as we have faced this pandemic together. I want to take this moment to thank each and every one of them, from the bottom of my heart.

Such dedication and service has made a profound difference. It is exactly the service that was envisaged in our founding Royal Charter as a charity that, at times of emergency in peace or war, we would render aid to the sick, train technical reserves; and provide trained personnel to give assistance to Central or Local Government Departments. And I firmly believe that now is the right time to build on the contribution of our clinical volunteers to the resilience of the nation during this pandemic by formally recognising the role of St John anew.

We want to develop and maintain the additional capacity we need to stand ready as the nation's auxiliary ambulance service; to retain and engage the thousands of new volunteers who've joined us during the pandemic by creating new roles and opportunities within St John for them to help their communities through first aid; and to ensure the expertise and capacity of skilled volunteers like ours is included in future planning for emergency resilience and response.

With the right support and partnership, we can build on what we've learnt during this pandemic to ensure a legacy of resilience for the future.

Please join us.

Yours,

Martin Houghton-Brown  
Chief Executive, St John Ambulance





**“Without your volunteers and staff members, the country would not have been able to increase the number of resources that we have been able to deploy. This has undoubtedly helped to relieve the pressure on the 999 service and ensure we have been able to save as many lives as possible.”**

Professor Anthony Marsh,  
National Strategic Advisor  
of Ambulance Services

## Summary

Many people know St John Ambulance as England’s leading first aid charity. We train around 250,000 people in first aid each year and our volunteers provide first aid cover to allow thousands of events to happen safely. Fundamentally, this work aims to keep communities safe and saves lives, but it also supports the health service - reducing the pressure on services and supporting people’s recovery from injury and illness with good care at the earliest stage.

The more direct support to the health service that we have always given is less well known. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the UK in spring 2020, we knew we had the skills and capacity to help, and rapidly transformed so we could give more. In some areas, such as ambulance provision, we expanded our already-existing capacities, but in other areas, such as in hospitals and in the community, our volunteers took on new roles transferring the skills they already had into new settings, such as providing clinical care in emergency departments. Our involvement in the vaccination programme has built on this work at an even greater scale, training and deploying thousands of new volunteers.

From the feedback we have had, we know that the one million hours of support St John has now given have not just been appreciated by the NHS but have had a substantial positive impact on patients and staff. We have heard that St John people have helped give NHS staff time to take a break or focus on more complex tasks, whilst volunteers have been able to give extra support to patients that staff have struggled to find the time to do. At a time of pressure and crisis, this support has made a difference to the care patients have received.

On ambulances, in hospitals, in their communities, and in vaccination centres, St John people have shown their adaptability and determination to change lives for the better. We now want to ensure that they can continue to support their communities and the health service and that we build a positive legacy for the nation’s resilience from the experience of the pandemic.

We believe it is important now to also formally recognise St John Ambulance within the architecture of national resilience, to ensure all relevant organisations that may need the assistance of St John’s clinically trained volunteers know they can call on us and can build this capacity into their emergency preparedness, resilience and response planning.

## At St John Ambulance we plan to:

- » Continue to develop our reserve capacity of clinically skilled volunteers and equipment, to ensure sufficient capacity to surge when needed by the ambulance service, in hospitals, or as vaccination volunteers:
  - Ensure continued deployment of these volunteers and equipment, such as our ambulances, outside of national emergency situations to ensure skills are maintained and used
  - Train, maintain and develop the skills of greater numbers of emergency ambulance crews, and provide more of the vehicles and equipment they need to allow us to provide more support to Ambulance Trusts. Maintaining this reserve capacity would mean we can provide support more quickly when trusts need it.
- » Continue to nurture relationships at national and local level to ensure our reserve of clinically skilled volunteers can be included in emergency planning, and deployed where they are needed

## To support this, we are proposing the Government:

- » Recognise St John Ambulance as England's Ambulance Auxiliary
- » Include St John Ambulance within the architecture of national and local resilience, including:
  - Specific recognition of St John Ambulance as the ambulance auxiliary within the Civil Contingencies Act
  - Clear references within any updated guidance that NHS organisations, not only Ambulance Trusts, may be able to call on St John's clinically trained volunteers
  - Closer integration of relevant voluntary sector organisations such as St John Ambulance in national emergency preparedness, resilience and response planning structures and exercises
- » Develop legal mechanisms that ensure skilled volunteers are effectively supported to take time out from their employment to deploy in a crisis where their skills and experience are needed.



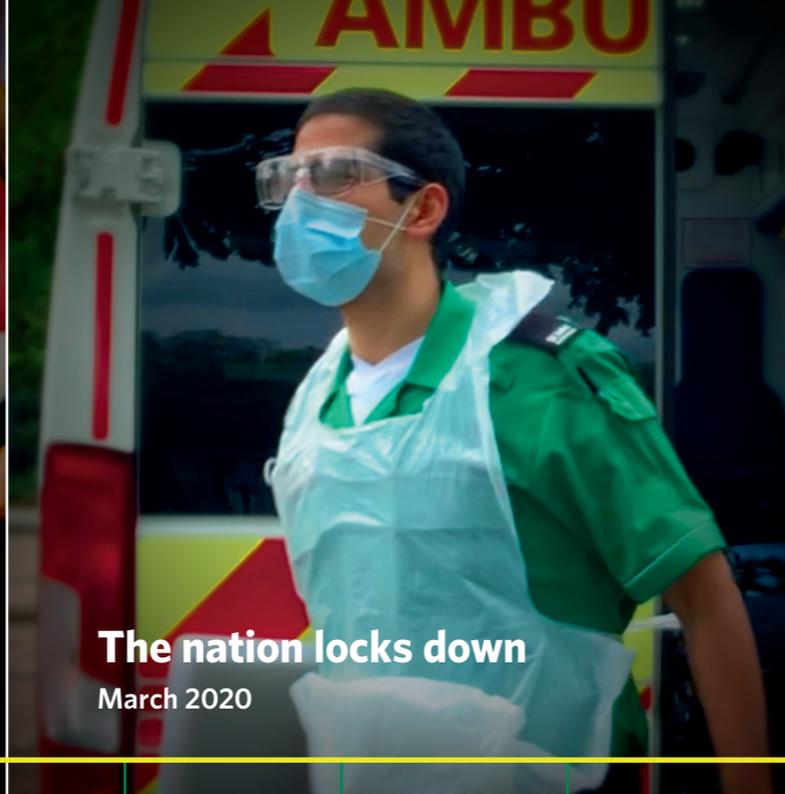
## For local structures and partners, we propose:

- » Increased involvement of organisations of skilled volunteers in emergency preparedness, resilience and response at local level, including within exercises and through representation within the emergency planning of ICSs and local Ambulance and Hospital trusts, alongside local resilience structures
- » Continued support for detailed mapping of the local voluntary sector, its capabilities, and skillsets in each area so that statutory services know the support the sector can provide, and can match cadres of volunteers with specific skillsets to relevant areas of need, including the local capabilities of national organisations such as St John Ambulance's local units.



### An emerging pandemic

January - March 2020



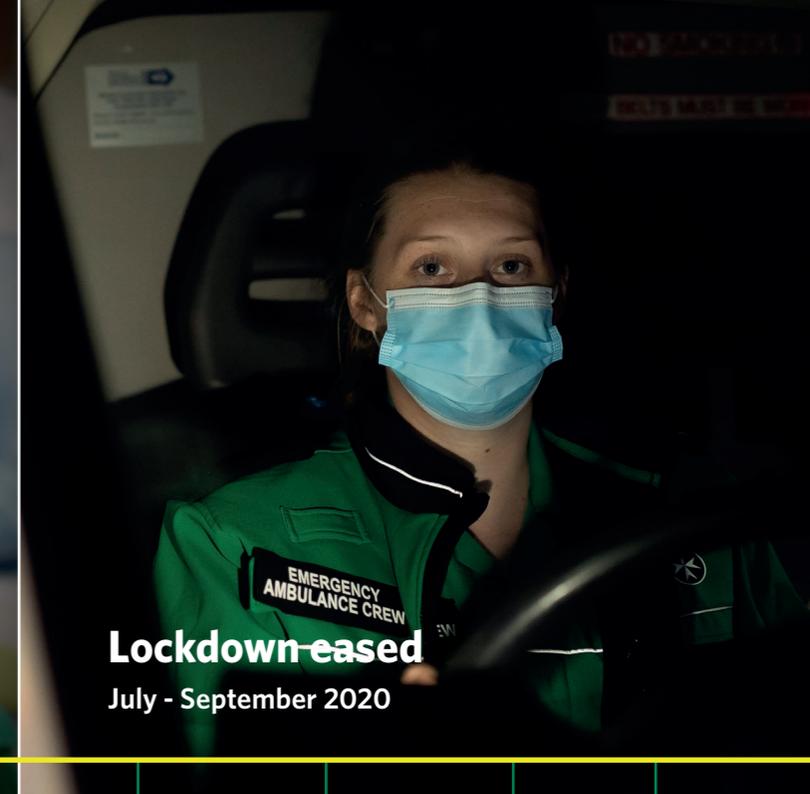
### The nation locks down

March 2020



### Covid's first wave

April - June 2020



### Lockdown eased

July - September 2020

Our Ambulance Operations were rated 'good' by the Care Quality Commission

Crisis response structures put in place

NHS relationships agreed

Difficult financial choices

Helping the return of live sport

Ensuring the safe return of first aid training at work

# 14,000

hours of winter pressure to support the NHS

100s of public events took place safely because of the first aid cover we provided

# 375 TRAINED

FOLLOWING THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR SPECIALIST COVID CARE TRAINING PROGRAMME

# 250,000

hours of frontline response in ambulances, hospitals & communities

Resilient & compassionate St John people

# HELPING THE NHS CATCH UP

Supporting the safe return of night-time economy

# 60,000+

PEOPLE TRAIN IN FIRST AID

# OVER 4000

VOLUNTEERS TRAINED IN COVID-19 CARE AND LOGISTICS TRANSFORMED

**Ask us what we did**



**A growing second wave**  
October - December 2020



**Vaccinations help the nation**  
January - July 2021



**1 million hours of Covid-19 care**



“This July, we delivered our millionth hour of Covid-related activity. Just think about that a moment: a million hours. What impresses me is how everybody has worked so hard, and it’s important to stress the word ‘everybody’ here. I know a lot of positive headlines have (deservedly) gone to our frontline people – the ambulance crews, hospital volunteers and vaccinators.

But the full story of our response involves so many more committed people. I’m talking about the trainers, those working in logistics, our fleet, HR, finance, and all of those who were shielding to keep us and their community safe. Every one of you has been part of this momentous achievement.”

Richard Lee MBE, Chief Operating Officer/  
Deputy CEO St John Ambulance

Increasing demand for ambulance and hospital volunteers

**400 VOLUNTEER VACCINATORS TRAINED**

New fleet designed by St John volunteers and made possible by generous donations

Volunteers start administering vaccinations and caring for people before and after their vaccinations

Nearly 30,000 volunteer vaccinators trained, ready to support the NHS. By July, they have supported in 400 venues across England

**WE MARKED 1 MILLION HOURS OF COVID-19 CARE DURING THE PANDEMIC**

**136,000 HOURS OF SUPPORT IN HOSPITALS**

**158,000 HOURS OF AMBULANCE SUPPORT**

including responding to thousands of 999 calls on behalf of Ambulance Trusts

58,000 hours of first aid in communities – supporting blood donations and caring for the homeless

**640,000**

41,000 hours of event first aid cover, helping public events return safely

hours of patient-facing care to support the Covid-19 vaccination programme

**PLANNING FOR UP TO 30,000 VACCINATION VOLUNTEERS**

**Ask us how  
we did it**



## Knowing we could help

When it became clear that Covid-19 was going to become a serious challenge, St John Ambulance knew we had the clinical skills, training capacity and logistical experience to step forward to serve the nation.

We have long been the nation's de-facto ambulance reserve, with our Royal Charter recognising our work providing ambulance services. We are the only voluntary organisation in the country with the scale of ambulance vehicles, equipment and clinically trained crews to respond to emergencies needing this kind of support.

Some of our thousands of highly skilled clinically trained volunteers were already assisting the NHS through busy winter months. Although that provision was drawing to a close in March 2020, we were well placed to extend and expand support to Ambulance Trusts and in Emergency Departments.

Our existing strong relationship with NHS England nationally and our relationships with local NHS providers and trusts meant that they knew what support we could provide and how we could help them. Where these existing relationships were strongest, we were able to step up faster to give support.



## Rapid reorganisation to serve the nation

St John Ambulance transformed at pace to meet the needs of the NHS and communities in this moment of national crisis.

Early on we recognised the need to change the organisation's rhythm and the way decisions were made. St John Ambulance's Chief Operating Officer and Deputy CEO, Richard Lee, was appointed the National Strategic Commander for our response to Covid-19.

- » A new Strategic Co-ordination Group, including stakeholders from across the organisation, met twice weekly to develop the national strategy, assess the strategic consequences of Covid-19, coordinate resource sharing and manage localised challenges through national collaboration.
- » A Joint Operations Co-ordination Cell was created at national level. This cell was active 24/7 as the single point of contact for all Covid-19 inquiries.
- » St John Ambulance developed two significant dashboard reporting processes to inform both the Strategic and Tactical Groups, ensuring clear internal communications.

## Incredible feats of training

St John Ambulance volunteers' high level of clinical training meant they were well placed to support the pandemic response, but we knew we needed to ensure all our people were ready for the specific challenges Covid-19 would bring.

Within days, our volunteer training team created a bespoke 20-hour Covid-19 care module to train volunteers more accustomed to giving first aid at football matches and community events to working safely in the pandemic environment, including going in to support NHS teams in hospital emergency departments for the first time. We also brought our entire Ambulance Essential Education Programme forward, to enable as many volunteers as wanted to step forward to help.

Emma Elgerton, who, as well as being a dedicated volunteer, is also Volunteering Development Officer in the West Midlands, takes up the story:



**“Way back in March 2020, we already knew that St John people would be asked to step up in a big way to help with the Covid response. So, my team and I got together in a room for a week and thought really hard about how we could turn all our Event First Aiders into a Covid response team. And that’s how the Care Module was born.**

**Basically, we started work on Monday morning and didn’t really leave the room until Saturday. And by that time, we had a workable product – a two-day course plus four hours of e-learning – that we could start testing. For context: developing that size and calibre of course normally takes around three to six months, and we did it in six days. I wouldn’t want to make a habit of it!**

**Once the Care Module got going, the next big challenge was dealing with the lockdown, and keeping all our volunteers connected and motivated now that everyone was stuck at home. Luckily, we had just started dabbling with VT Live – St John’s online training platform – literally a few weeks earlier, so at least we weren’t starting from scratch.**

**As volunteers, we got to see first-hand how loads of people were putting up their hands and offering to go out there and help. Especially in those early stages, it took a real degree of courage to put yourself forward – it was such a scary time.”**

This rapid development has been recognised with a silver award in the People Development Programme category of the Learning Awards, which recognise innovation and achievement in training, and was used to train over 4,000 volunteers in the first few months of the pandemic.

## Onboarding new volunteers

We identified early in our response to the pandemic the potential opportunity to partner with organisations with employees trained to a high standard in first aid but furloughed, such as airlines. To their existing training we were able to bolt on COVID-19-specific modules and successful partnerships with British Airways and TUI resulted in us on-boarding over 400 additional skilled volunteers to help with the pandemic response.

## Supporting our St John People: logistics and PPE

Behind our clinical teams, our vital support volunteers have made sure that our vehicles are in the right place and that our kit, including PPE, is restocked. Importantly, they've been at the end of the phone whenever staff and volunteers have had questions or wanted to book onto a shift. In addition, our Fleet Team have ensured we always have sufficient vehicles around the country to be utilised in a range of different ways, as well as ensuring we have appropriate resilience and breakdown services in order to respond. We could not have supported the NHS in the way we have, without the dedication of these extraordinary volunteers.



## Effective collaboration with sector partners

As part of our approach we are continuing to work in partnership with the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives through participation in the Director of Operations Group. Following on from successful collaboration on 'Winter Pressures' support during the busy winter months, we have regular contact with the British Red Cross and AgeUK to keep one another updated, are working with the Royal Voluntary Service and British Red Cross on a volunteer passport initiative and are active participants in the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership.

## Resourcing challenges and financial support

Funding for St John Ambulance's community response work comes in part from our first aid training and event support. When lockdown began this immediately shut down, with a weekly loss of £1.6m revenue. We are immensely grateful to a government grant of support that enabled us to stabilise and completely re-orient our operations to provide support where it was needed within the NHS and local communities. Alongside the partnership and support of NHS England, we are also grateful for the generosity of existing and new donors and supporters who themselves stepped forward in response to our Emergency Fundraising Appeal. Together we kept St John ambulances on the road and supported St John people to make their immense contribution.

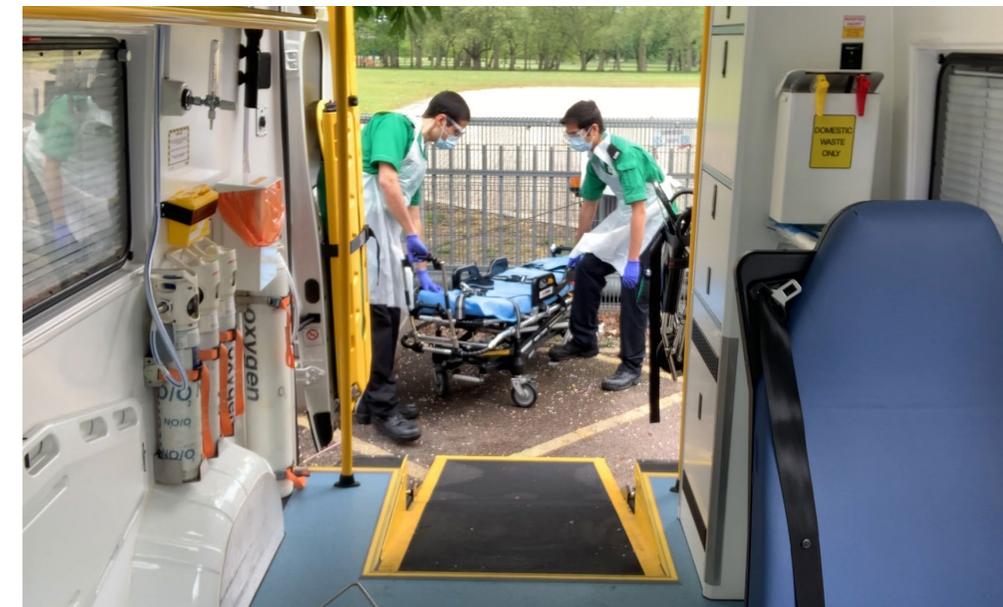
A portrait of Dr. Zain Osmani, a man with short dark hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a green t-shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression.

**Ask us** about the  
impact we've had

## On ambulances

"I didn't think twice about doing it; I knew I had the skills to make a positive difference. I was doing four 12-hour shifts in a row, followed by four days off... The biggest challenge was being in someone's house and having to take the patient to hospital, knowing their relatives may never see them again."

Dr Zain Osmani, 26,  
Ambulance Crew in Brighton



**"I am writing to thank you and express my gratitude for the continued support, dedication, and co-operation that you have demonstrated from the initial stages of the global pandemic. I honestly believe that if we had not worked so closely, the ability of Emergency Ambulance Service within our country to respond so effectively to the pandemic, would have been greatly hindered. Without your volunteers and staff members, the country would not have been able to increase the number of resources that we have been able to deploy. This has undoubtedly helped to relieve the pressure on the 999 service and ensure we have been able to save as many lives as possible. Your members have been a credit to themselves, and yourself as a National Charity, and have shown themselves to be professional, caring, and skilful in the way they have conducted themselves."**

Professor Anthony Marsh, National Strategic Advisor of Ambulance Services at NHS England and NHS Improvement



St John has deployed volunteer and employed ambulance crews to 10 out of the 11 Ambulance Trusts in the country throughout the pandemic:

- » Responding to Category 3 or 4 (urgent/less urgent) situations to perform initial assessments and provide treatment, discharge on scene with appropriate support; provide onward referrals, and give the relevant advice and information to the patient;
- » Providing non-emergency transfer to hospital or another health care setting, or between hospital sites
- » At times of high demand, St John Ambulance crews were also used to respond to Category 1 and 2 (life threatening/emergency) situations, adding clinical support to existing crews on scene or initially respond to 999 calls, backed up by a resource from the local Ambulance Trusts.

# 158,000

**TOTAL NUMBER OF AMBULANCE HOURS, MARCH 2020 - JULY 2021**

Over the course of 2,000 hours, Matt Jones has been at the heart of our volunteer ambulance operations since the start of the pandemic:

**“My main role is Emergency Ambulance Crew, though through the pandemic I also helped manage the East London ambulance hub. As hub manager, I was the first line of support to help crews with any issues on shifts and provide updates, and so on. It’s fair to say both roles were pretty full-on during those early days.**

**As ambulance crews answering 999 calls, we’d often find ourselves needing to go back to the station to grab replacement oxygen cylinders then go straight back out again because so many patients were very sick and needing a lot of oxygen. And such challenges were compounded by the increased wait times to get people handed over at hospital. It was tough going for a while.**



**I think our work has had a huge impact on a number of levels. We definitely helped cement St John’s relationship with NHS Ambulance Trusts, for example. Plus, we demonstrated the fantastic quality of care that all our ambulance volunteers can provide. And even when other aspects of St John’s response – the Nightingale hospitals, the vaccination programme – deservedly grabbed the headlines, we were always plugging away in the background and achieving so much.**

**For me the stand-out moments of the pandemic were the 73 ambulance shifts I got to do with my wife. Quite early on, she got personal release from her teaching duties because her school recognised the positive impact she could have out there. I’m sure we’ll be proud of what we achieved and how we contributed.**

**As for the pandemic itself: we now have an opportunity to prepare ourselves as best as possible for the next one.”**

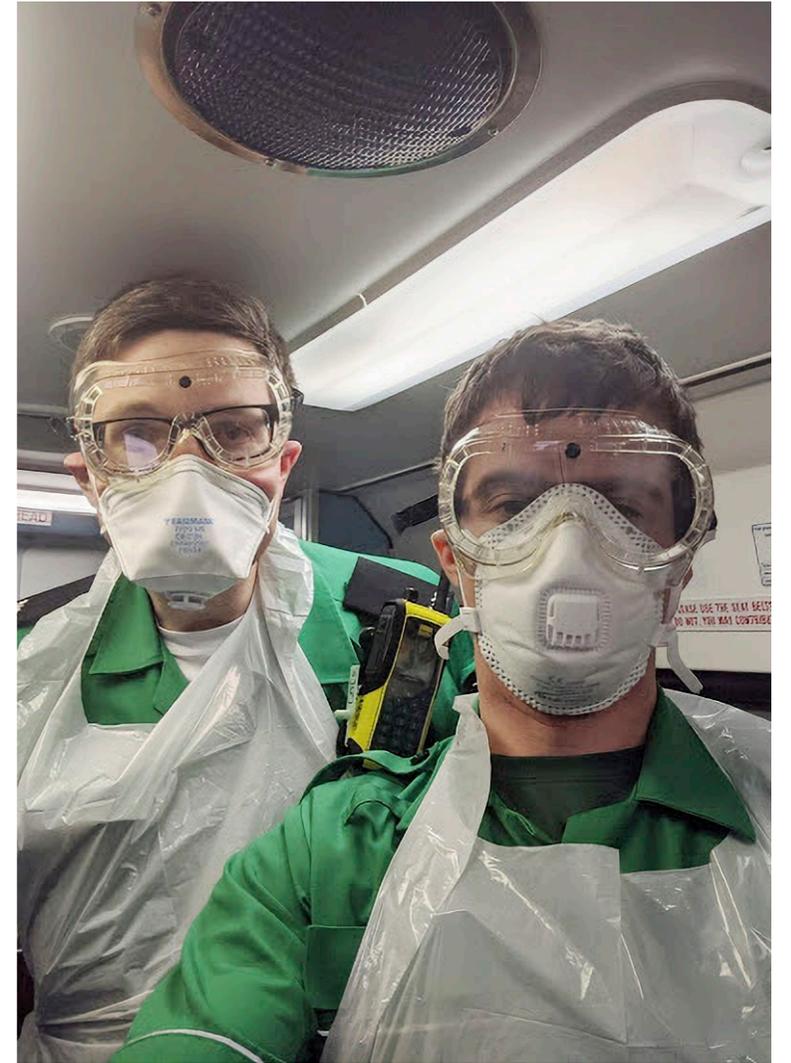
Our internal evaluation has found that Ambulance Trusts welcomed the additional capacity provided by volunteers during unprecedented times, helping trusts to respond to as many patients as quickly as possible. In particular, St John volunteers have been able to respond to falls patients in a timely manner, reducing the time that they might have been on the floor waiting for an ambulance, and therefore potentially reducing deterioration. Volunteers have supported the trusts in their endeavours to keep patients at home and out of hospital wherever possible, and the evaluation found good examples where this had been the case.

For patients, St John crews provided a high level of compassionate care, putting patients at ease and taking their time to go the extra mile to ensure patients felt cared for.

Our evaluation also found that there has been more demand during the pandemic than St John has been able to fulfil, with the ad hoc nature of some ambulance support provision, making it harder to factor St John crews into their resource planning. Ambulance Trusts would welcome the opportunity to work closely with St John to develop a strong longer-term partnership and use the learning to date to tailor a model in line with their local circumstances and St John’s strategic objectives.

We believe that the best way to build on the innovations of the pandemic would be for St John to be formally recognised and supported as the nation’s ambulance auxiliary, allowing us to cement and expand our emergency ambulance operations to the levels that have been needed during this pandemic as preparation for any future national crisis. This would build on the support given during the pandemic and provide certainty to Ambulance Trusts in their resource planning both in terms of the resource available, and which type of calls it would be most useful to Ambulance Trusts for St John to respond to.

By building an ever ready, scaled ambulance auxiliary we can ensure Trusts are confident to build it into their emergency planning, maximising its deployment in the next crisis.



## In hospitals

**“Everyone is agreed we couldn’t have got through the last few months without the volunteers. They have a can-do attitude and quickly became part of the team. To collectively volunteer nearly 10,000 hours for Cambridge University Hospitals Trust since March 2020 is just incredible, and some have found it so rewarding they have gone on to apply for hospital-related positions such as health care assistants.”**

David Monk, Operations Manager  
Urgent and Unscheduled Care,  
Addenbrooke’s Hospital, Cambridge

# 136,000

**TOTAL NUMBER OF HOSPITAL  
HOURS MARCH 2020 - JULY 2021**

In winter 2019-2020 we piloted hospital volunteering as part of our work for the NHS. It told us that St John volunteers could provide useful and helpful support to hospital staff and were valued by staff and patients alike. So, when Covid-19 arrived in the UK, we moved to give hospitals this support again.

Since then, our clinically trained volunteers have used their skills to alleviate pressure in busy A&E departments and various wards across 38 Hospital Trusts including:

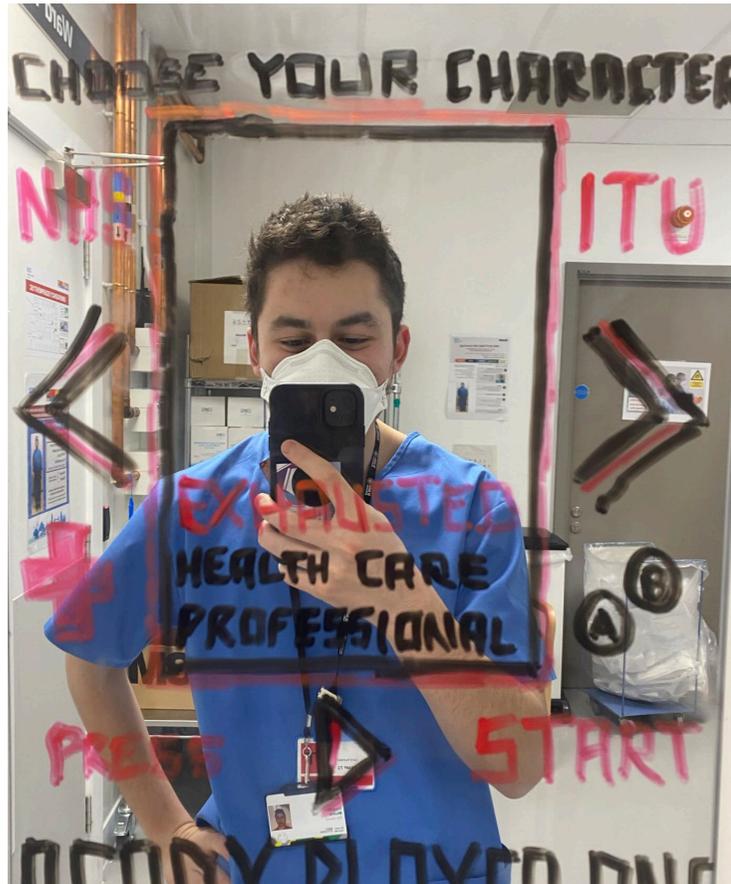


providing clinical care and support, such as clinical observations, assisting with triaging of patients, and personal care support; and coordination of care and logistics, such as meeting and greeting patients, escorting patients between departments, and making and turning over beds.

St John’s internal evaluation found that NHS staff valued the professional and personal support provided by the hospital volunteers, which they said brought a sense of relief and lessened their own anxiety. Volunteers were seen to be responsive, providing an extra set of eyes and ears during busy times. This also helped to free up staff time to focus on patients with more complex needs.

The enhanced skillset of the St John volunteers was valued, with staff saying that this meant that St John could perform tasks other volunteers could not do and that they integrated into A&E quickly and effectively. Volunteers were embedded within the NHS A&E teams, which was integral to the effectiveness of the approach and enhanced patient experience. Volunteers aided a more efficient flow of patients through the department and hospital, by helping to transfer patients, supporting triaging of patients, restocking equipment, turning over beds and preparing patients for discharge.

Critically, patients experienced a high level of compassionate care from St John volunteers. When staff were busy and short of time, volunteers had the time to do the ‘little things’ that really matter to patients, such as bringing refreshments, giving them information, making sure they have their belongings when they are being discharged, and sitting with them when they felt anxious. They also helped to reduce patients’ anxiety; at a time when friends and family were not allowed to accompany patients into hospital, St John volunteers have been able to reassure and comfort patients, reducing their worry and anxiety.



**"I joined St John Ambulance in October 2020. I am an Operational First Aider, which in usual times would mean events but all I've known is COVID. During the pandemic, I wanted to help in hospitals to try and alleviate some of the pressure on the NHS. My experience of working shoulder to shoulder with the staff there has been really positive. Ask me why I volunteer? It brings a great sense of satisfaction to help someone in need."**

Caspar Michie, 21, Operational First Aider

**"Our work is not all about taking observations and practical help. We chat to the patients, read letters and show photographs from family to keep them going. Strangers are having to play the role of family and that's where St John can help. I was feeding a lady who was struggling and she said, 'I can't tell you how nice it is that you have come to talk to me.' I would want someone there like this with my family if they needed it during this time."**

Nadine Tudor, 37, Operational First Aider who now works as a healthcare assistant in an accident and emergency department.



Hospital staff were keen to keep St John volunteers integrated within their A&E departments and were open to what the St John offer may look like in the future, post-Covid. We are keen to build on the support our volunteers have given in hospitals throughout the pandemic, that has been so valued by hospital staff and patients alike and will be supporting hospitals with winter pressures for 2021/22.

## In the community

# 58,000

**TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS  
IN THE COMMUNITY  
MARCH 2020 - JULY 2021**

Throughout the pandemic, outside of hospitals and ambulance, St John people continued to support in their community, including:

- » Helping to deliver care to people who are homeless and would otherwise struggle to access healthcare. For example:
  - St John services in Sussex administer first aid and provide wound care as well as more specialised podiatry care
  - In Bolton, a 'one stop shop' for people who are homeless involves a collaboration between local health services, a street kitchen, drug and alcohol services, housing support, and St John Ambulance. This collaboration was highly commended in the Health Service Journal's Patient Safety Awards

- » Acting as Community First Responders, including in London where they were on duty on over 6,600 occasions through the year for both call outs and to support 111 call-taking and logistics. Volunteers have provided similar support in the South West and as Unit Responders in the West Midlands
- » Supporting primary care in Birmingham through providing cars and first aiders to assist on-call GPs
- » Assisting with thousands of blood donations across the country
- » Using mobile treatment centres to help with cancer care in the community
- » Continuing to deliver our falls services and delivering a range of patient transport services
- » Caring for refugees arriving from Afghanistan at UK airports who had dehydration, malnutrition and sustained injuries during their wait to leave the country.

Craig Halliday had been a long-time first aider for St John and after taking a break from the charity, he re-joined during the first few months of the pandemic. He now leads for St John Ambulance on the work of the Bolton Homeless Outreach Project and volunteers with similar projects across Greater Manchester:

**“For me it’s been a natural progression. Once everything happened with the pandemic, I made a few calls to see if St John were accepting re-joiners. I joined the logistics branch and was volunteering in the hub setting up PPE packs. After taking a driving course I started ferrying about equipment all across the north of England. Then, I was approached to help with community response work and take out the mobile treatment centre and now I’ve moved into a role leading the service.**

**The service in Bolton is led by the CCG and their community nurses who deliver care at a regular street kitchen. One of the things we provide as St John is a mobile treatment centre. This gives the nurses a clean, lit, heated and private clinical environment.**

**In the past few months, our first aiders have started to give more clinical support, assisting the nurses, helping to triage and find out who needs to see them. Aside from this, the main thing we do is just talking to people. We can be there as a helpful listening ear. Leading on from that, I’m looking into how we can use some of the mental health first aid training to up-skill the team so they are more knowledgeable and can signpost people as appropriate.**

**The service engages people who would otherwise struggle to get help. A lot of people won’t come into clinics, they’d rather see someone in their own environment. For some of these people, if they didn’t get care from the outreach service then they could end up deteriorating and injuries could lead to potential sepsis and even loss of life.”**

# Vaccinating the nation

TOTAL HOURS OF CARE GIVEN  
TO SUPPORT THE COVID-19  
VACCINATION PROGRAMME

640,000

St John Ambulance's record of upskilling and deploying our clinically trained volunteers where needed throughout the pandemic, alongside our training expertise, meant we were well placed to recruit, train and deploy almost 30,000 new volunteers within the Covid-19 vaccination programme in three roles:

- » Volunteer Vaccinators, who are administering the vital vaccines. They receive extensive training and assessments (observed vaccinations), including learning how to recognise and respond to a medical emergency. Healthcare professionals provide clinical supervision at each vaccination site to ensure the safety of all patients and volunteers
- » Vaccination Care Volunteers, who meet and greet patients and help them navigate the vaccination centre, as well as directing them to external resources if needed. Like the Volunteer Vaccinators, they are trained to recognise and respond to a medical emergency

- » Volunteer Patient Advocates who are taught to recognise and respond to patients' needs, including supporting people with impairments. Patient Advocates work closely with NHS doctors and nurses to make sure everyone feels at ease throughout the process.

Recruiting and training such large numbers of volunteers required the support of partners such as the Royal Voluntary Service and a huge backroom operation at St John. The 28,000 online interviews were conducted by a 300-strong welcome team and hundreds of trainers worked quickly train thousands of new volunteers each week. It also required us to adopt new agile ways of thinking and working.

Volunteer Scott Wiggins has been helping across the board since the pandemic first hit, including two roles within the vaccination programme.

**"Before Covid happened, my regular role was as a District Event Lead. But when the pandemic hit, I offered support where I was most needed - which initially meant helping run the ambulance response in Coventry and hospital volunteering in my area. But when the vaccination programme came along, I knew I'd be able to help out there, too.**

**I started out as a Volunteer Vaccination Lead. (Incidentally, the VVLs, who each manage around a couple of hundred volunteers, are among the unsung heroes of the programme.) But I soon realised I could make even more impact as an Area Manager, overseeing my three Units and supporting the VVLs.**

**The Area Manager role has been key because we tie together all the strands between Training teams, Units, Logistics and everyone else. We spread word of the latest updates and help resolve issues as they crop up. You're basically like the hub of the wheel.**

**With the vaccination programme, there was a lot of learning on the job because things changed so quickly all the time. The pace of change early on was pretty full-on, so it was a challenge to keep up with that. Plus, the scale of our recruitment was off the charts. We usually recruit two or three volunteers at a time. But suddenly we were having to process a whole unit's worth of volunteers - around 25 people - in a single day.**

**The volunteers have stepped forward when asked and totally bought into the ethos of St John, and its mission. There's a real can-do attitude out there. And as someone who's regularly in the thick of all that positivity, I can tell you it's a humbling experience every day."**



# Ask us about our new vaccination volunteers

Photography by Matt Davis



**Ka Chun Li**

I'm 20 and I moved from my home in Hong Kong last year to start a degree in microbiology at Imperial College, London. I joined St John Ambulance to meet new people. As well as being a volunteer vaccinator, I'm also part of the National Welcome Team so I interview people who apply to volunteer for the vaccination programme. **It feels good knowing that we're making progress towards getting the country out of the restrictions caused by the pandemic.**

**Zainab Yasmin**

I'm 43 and I work as a public health programme manager in Tower Hamlets. I'm studying for a masters degree in public health. I joined St John Ambulance in March 2020 but I couldn't start volunteering immediately as I contracted Covid-19. **Experiencing the psychological and physical symptoms of Covid-19 spurred me to want to help even more.** I'm excited to be making a difference, helping to prevent an increase in cases and bringing our country a step closer to normality. I volunteered at Heathrow Airport as part of the Falcon Moonshot study to test and validate new, faster Covid-19 tests. Now I'm volunteering at the Royal London Hospital, supporting staff in the emergency department and adult critical care alongside my role as a vaccinator.





## Nia Faulder

I'm a 35-year-old mum of two and I live in Bolton. I'm a scientist and I work as a programme manager for an international education provider in Manchester. I use a wheelchair because I suffered a nerve compression injury during pregnancy in 2017. My disability nearly precluded me from training to be a vaccinator as one of the screening questions was "can you stand up for a six-hour shift?" to which I obviously replied "no". But I wasn't going to be deterred, so I contacted St John Ambulance and after exchanges with occupational health, I was accepted on the training programme. My beloved grandad was my greatest inspiration in life and he died of Covid in January 2021, shortly before he was due to be vaccinated.

## Professor Claire Vallance

I'm 45 and I'm a Professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of Oxford. I was out on a bike ride with some friends and we came around a corner to a very distressing situation - a child shouting for help at the top of his voice while his mother lay on the ground next to him, unconscious and not breathing, with serious facial injuries. They'd been out horse riding, the horses had bolted and she'd been thrown off and landed head first. It was just three weeks after I'd done my First Aid at Work training course. While doing the course, I remember wondering whether I would actually be able to do what was needed in real life. When it came to it, I barely even thought about it. I opened her airway, at which point she started breathing and quickly turned from blue to pink. Very carefully I put her in the recovery position. Her husband turned up soon afterwards and was able to get some blankets to keep her warm and by the time the ambulance arrived she was starting to regain consciousness. The first thing I did when I arrived home was to write to my St John trainer and thank him. I've now trained as a volunteer vaccinator as it sounded like a really interesting opportunity and a chance to learn some new skills.



## Ask us about our plans

**How St John Ambulance is building on the innovations of the pandemic to create a legacy of clinically skilled volunteers to help with emergencies**



## Expanding our capacity

At St John Ambulance we understand how important it is to ensure that the leaps forward in our experience and capacity gained through emergency volunteering during Covid-19 are retained and developed. Through our pandemic volunteering, particularly the vaccination programme, we have trained tens of thousands of people in first aid. Many of these people are keen to be involved in other ways and we are supporting them to fulfil their volunteering ambitions and create a resource of people who are ready to step forward.

### We are creating a legacy by:

**Developing new roles** within the organisation to ensure all those who have joined St John as volunteers during the pandemic and want to continue to regularly volunteer are able to. We are expanding our areas of service delivery such as hospital volunteering, creating vastly increased capacity.

**Developing our own 'St John Reserve'** of people that want to help specifically in a crisis or for a specific event. This reserve of trained and interested people will be contacted regarding specific events, or at a time of national crisis and their existing skills refreshed with our 'just in time' training.

The unique clinical skills and expertise of our existing volunteers, the increased numbers of our new volunteers looking to stay on and regularly volunteer, as well as our St John reserve of trained and skilled people ready to have their skills refreshed and step forward for a specific event or national crisis, means we are truly becoming the nation's clinical volunteer reserve, with capacity to provide the expanded ambulance auxiliary that's needed by Ambulance Trusts.

## Learning from our pandemic deployment

Our pandemic response has involved huge innovation and incredible individual and organisational responses to unprecedented challenges. We have also learnt huge amounts from our volunteers and partners on how our response can be improved to serve even more people in even better ways and we will continue to change and adapt our emergency response work to take account of these learnings. Critically, we have learned and implemented the importance of focusing where our specialist clinical expertise and capacity can make the biggest difference.



## Building partnerships

Being a national organisation means we can coordinate an overall response with other national partners in the sector and pull in resources from different areas to meet high demand for emergency support. However, it is also our local relationships with individual organisations that have been essential to the support we have delivered during the pandemic. In the future, we will continue to develop those relationships where they already exist, and work to engage with more NHS organisations which might benefit from the support of St John's support in emergencies, ensuring we maximise the help we can give as a national organisation consisting of local units based across the country.

## Continuing our work supporting the health of the nation outside of emergencies

Outside of major local or national emergencies, St John people continue to offer incredible service to their communities, including providing first aid as public events and gatherings return to our community calendars.

For example, our Night-Time Economy work (night response support) has recently expanded, these services utilise trained cadres of volunteers to reduce the pressure on the health service and provide care in the community. By the end of 2021, we hope to be in 40 locations, caring for people who become injured or unwell when on nights out and reducing demand on emergency services.

After almost 100 years of supporting young people to learn and use health skills in their communities, we continue to grow our exciting youth programmes. Our new NHS Cadets and Young Responders programmes will help us reach a more diverse range of young people, teaching them valuable first aid skills and encouraging and supporting many of them to pursue healthcare careers.

And 26,500 vaccination volunteers were all trained in the basic first aid which can help save lives, in itself a hugely positive legacy for our work in recent months. In addition, we have now been commissioned create a network of community advocates who will train 60,000 people in CPR. The programme is particularly targeted at addressing gaps in current provision. Overall, the programme aims to save 4,000 lives each year by 2028.



**“The man was breathing, and I didn’t want to move him initially in case he had neck and spinal injuries. But then I realised he was not breathing normally, and he subsequently lost consciousness, so I knew I had to get him out. I told myself out loud that it was a case of life over limb. At that point it was obvious he’d stopped breathing so I unzipped his jacket and started chest compressions. A town centre security guard arrived, so I asked him to radio for a defibrillator.**

**The fact that I’d done the defib training as part of the St John vaccinator course in February definitely helped. It was as if I was on auto-pilot – there was no time for hesitation, so I just did what I’d been taught. I used to be a Royal Air Force dental nurse and probably the battlefield casualty drills we used to do helped as well. You still don’t know how you’re going to react when something like this happens in real life. There were a lot of people standing around not knowing what to do.”**

Lynne Richards, 60, who trained as a volunteer vaccinator and then used her skills to help save the life of a van driver who crashed his van after collapsing at the wheel

## At St John Ambulance we plan to:

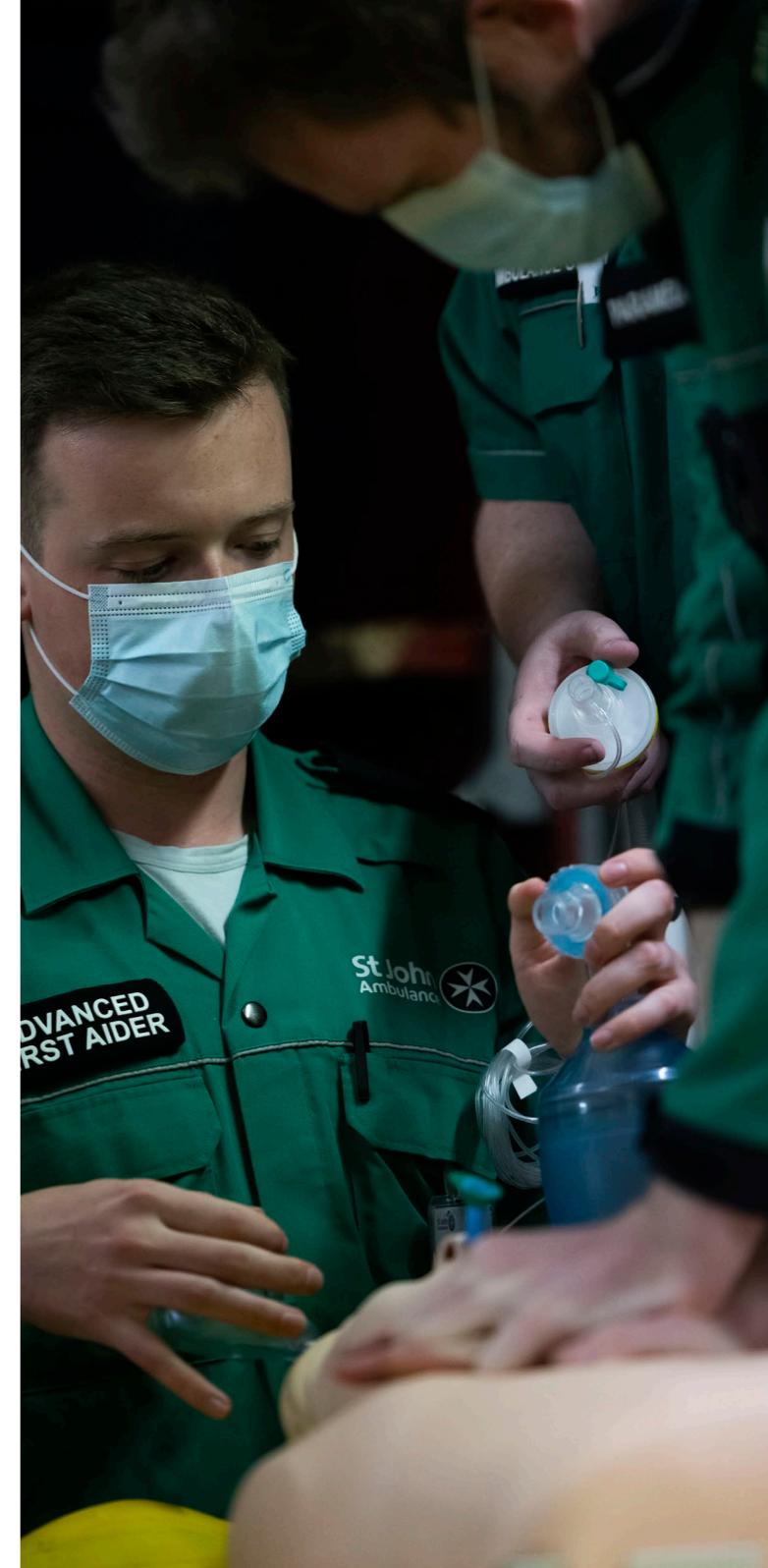
- » Continue to develop our reserve capacity of clinically skilled volunteers and equipment, to ensure sufficient capacity to surge when needed by the ambulance service, in hospitals, or as vaccination volunteers
  - Ensure continued deployment of these volunteers and equipment, such as our ambulances, outside of national emergency situations to ensure skills are maintained and used
  - Train, maintain and develop the skills of greater numbers of emergency ambulance crews, and provide more of the vehicles and equipment they need to allow us to provide more support to Ambulance Trusts. Maintaining this reserve capacity would mean we can provide support more quickly when trusts need it
- » Continue to nurture relationships at national and local level to ensure our reserve of clinically skilled volunteers can be included in emergency planning, and deployed where they are needed.



**Ask us our vision  
for the future**

**A clinically skilled  
volunteer reserve on hand  
to serve in times of crisis**

We believe it is important now to also formally recognise St John Ambulance within the architecture of national resilience, to ensure all relevant organisations that may need the assistance of St John's clinically trained volunteers know they can call on us, and can build this capacity into their emergency preparedness, resilience and response planning.



## Ambulance auxiliary

Our experiences during the pandemic have shown us how much we are needed as an auxiliary ambulance service. The 158,000 hours of ambulance support we have provided have demonstrated our capacity and strengthened our relationships with national and local services.

During the pandemic, St John Ambulance received more demand for our ambulance services than we could meet, and the capacity required during the emergency surge was much more than we could currently sustain in normal times, when these levels are not needed. We want to address this by training and maintaining the skills of greater numbers of emergency ambulance crews, vehicles and equipment, to provide more support to Ambulance Trusts when they need it.

Our new volunteers and St John reserve, in addition to our thousands of existing clinically trained volunteers, mean we will now be in a position to provide the emergency capacity needed and continue this long term, if we are designated and resourced to step forward whenever needed.

St John Ambulance is already the nation's de facto ambulance auxiliary. Greater integration into the national resilience architecture, with appropriate resourcing, would give us confidence to build and maintain this capacity, enable local ambulance organisations to be confident to include St John in their emergency plans, supporting long-range planning and ensuring efficiency, and ensure St John Ambulance could contribute our clinical and logistical expertise to national and local emergency planning to a far greater degree.

To support this, we are proposing the Government

- » Recognise St John Ambulance as England's Ambulance Auxiliary
- » Include St John Ambulance within the architecture of national and local resilience, including:
  - Specific recognition of St John Ambulance as the ambulance auxiliary within the Civil Contingencies Act
  - Clear references within any updated guidance that NHS organisations, not only Ambulance Trusts, may be able to call on St John's clinically trained volunteers
  - Closer integration of relevant voluntary sector organisations such as St John Ambulance in national emergency preparedness, resilience and response planning structures and exercises.



## A clinical volunteer reserve

Since the start of the pandemic St John volunteers have supported in hospitals in 38 NHS Trusts, giving 136,000 hours of clinically skilled volunteer support. We have received very positive feedback from NHS staff about how much this assistance has been valued. We have also seen substantial enthusiasm from vaccination volunteers for volunteering with us in future to support the NHS if we are able to give them the right training. We plan to continue to develop our hospital volunteering offer with volunteers and local and national partners, ensuring there's a space for clinically skilled hospital volunteering in future, wherever it is needed. Our reserve of clinically skilled volunteers would also be able to step forward when needed in other settings, such as future mass vaccination programmes.



## Voluntary sector embedded within national resilience architecture

The voluntary sector has played a vital role in responding to the pandemic. This effort has included smaller local organisations as well as large national organisations. We believe increased efforts should be made to make sure volunteers and voluntary organisations are involved in planning and preparation for emergencies at both national and local level.

There should be increased recognition of the 'volunteer not amateur' nature of volunteers with specific highly trained skillsets, such as the clinically trained volunteers of St John Ambulance, and a focus within emergency planning and deployment on matching cadres of volunteers with specific skillsets to relevant areas of need.

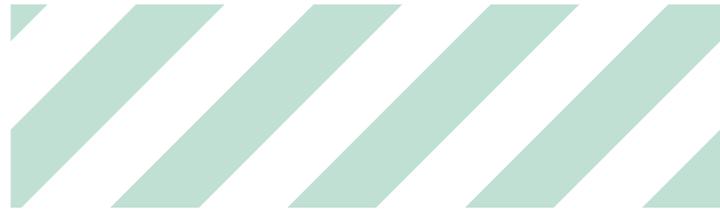
For local structures and partners, we propose:

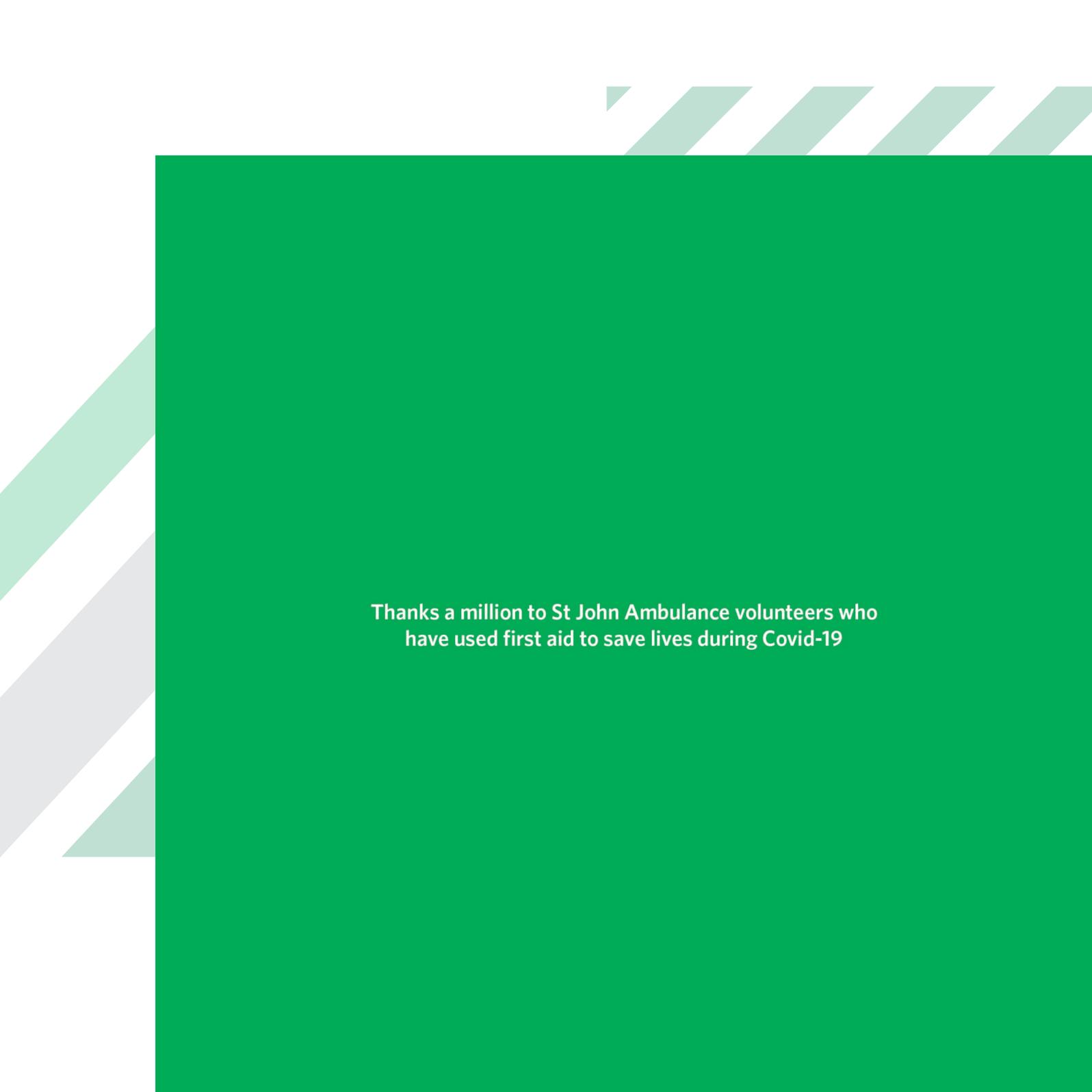
- » Increased involvement of organisations of skilled volunteers in emergency preparedness, resilience and response at local level, including within exercises and through representation within the emergency planning of ICSs and local Ambulance and Hospital Trusts, alongside local resilience structures
- » Continued support for detailed mapping of the local voluntary sector, its capabilities, and skillsets in each area so that statutory services know the support the sector can provide, and can match cadres of volunteers with specific skillsets to relevant areas of need, including the local capabilities of national organisations such as St John Ambulance's local units.

And finally, whilst the furlough scheme has meant that volunteers have been able to deploy in large numbers during the pandemic, as this has wound down there has been a reduction in volunteer availability. An important learning from the pandemic is the need to put in place a legal mechanism for enabling skilled volunteers to take time out of employment to contribute their skills and experience in times of crisis.

- » We propose that Government develop legal mechanisms that ensure skilled volunteers are effectively supported to take time out from their employment to deploy in a crisis where their skills and experience are needed.







Thanks a million to St John Ambulance volunteers who  
have used first aid to save lives during Covid-19