

# Case Study: Scottish Mountain Rescue

## Tailoring support for volunteers' friends and family

In 2018, we conducted a review of all aspects of mountain rescue team member wellbeing, and looked at where improvements could be made. This led to a conversation with Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ), where we highlighted our desire to do more to help support the families of volunteers. FENZ kindly shared some of the engagement work that they had recently completed around the topic, including a 'welcome to the team' family booklet.

We immediately recognised that this would be of value to our mountain rescue families in Scotland and, with FENZ's permission, went about creating a similar version. Most of the material was immediately transferable but the team at Lifelines Scotland (a Scotland-wide NHS project supporting the wellbeing of volunteer responders) kindly reviewed and added additional relevant content.

We wanted to ensure that the booklet could be tailored to be team specific, making it as relatable and relevant as possible to each mountain rescue team. This included making sure that the booklet was representative of our volunteers' work, and of the volunteers themselves. This would give it a local feel, making it more engaging for the intended audience.

To achieve this, we first designed a template booklet layout with the core content laid out in sections. We then invited teams to provide their own photographs, a breakdown of the incident types and numbers in their own operational area, and options to add links to local sources of support. The design company then produced the team-specific booklets as print-ready PDFs and teams could then organise printing if they wished or issue them in digital form. This shared-input approach was key to each team's adoption and usage of the booklets, helping to ensure they reached and supported their intended audience.

Booklets are supplied to all new volunteers within each team, helping to inform both the volunteer and their family about what to expect when someone in the family volunteers with a mountain rescue team. We've seen the difference these booklets have made, helping to create greater understanding and awareness of how the role may impact on family life and how they can support one another. They have also been a great asset in connecting families through peer support channels we suggest within the booklet.

The booklets can be equally useful to other organisations with volunteer responders. A great example of this is the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) who have taken the idea forward already, crediting the work that FENZ, SMR and Lifelines Scotland had put into this resource.

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