

The 'Elusive Good Samaritans': Locating those who have witnessed or performed CPR and signposting them to appropriate support

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PURPOSE

The psychological impact of witnessing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) has been likened to those seen in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), highlighting that the emotional toll on someone who performs or witnesses CPR, especially in high-demanding situations like a sudden cardiac arrest, can be profound and long-lasting.¹ Debriefing and defusing is essential for preventing PTSD-type signs and symptoms developing in lay responders.

Contacting 'The Elusive Good Samaritan' post event is challenging and timely signposting to appropriate support difficult. Furthermore, understanding of the support needs of this unique population are not well recognised.

Recent data* gathered via the Wales Omnibus survey (March 2025), found in the representative population surveyed (n=1000, aged 16+), that nearly a third of respondents (n=309) had witnessed someone collapse and in need of CPR. Importantly, less than 40% of this subgroup were offered support after the OHCA event, see [Figure 1](#).

In the UK, most out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCA) occur at home. The service improvement work reported here, investigates the frequency of 'rescuers' being known to OHCA survivors and the feasibility of the survivor playing a role in facilitating support access for their rescuer.

* The Save a Life Cymru Programme (Wales, UK) commissioned Beaufort Research to conduct a survey in Wales of public knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards CPR and defibrillation in the circumstances of OHCA. Data was gathered by Beaufort Research using the Wales Omnibus survey, fieldwork was conducted online between 3rd - 23rd March, 2025.

METHODS

The Resuscitation Council UK '[Support after cardiac arrest](#)' resource** provides signposts to the range of support across the UK for those affected by cardiac arrest, see [Figure 2](#). The support includes telephone helplines, peer support and online resources. Since going live in June 2024, the webpage has over 7,800 views. [Figure 3](#) presents a breakdown of views across the UK nations (where location is known).

As part of service improvement, patients (and/or their family members) who attended Cardiac Rehabilitation following a cardiac arrest (between 20/11/24-12/05/25) in Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board (BCHUB) Wales, received a wallet sized card, signposting to the '[Support after cardiac arrest](#)' web resource, see [Figure 4](#).

Data were collected regarding: location of cardiac arrest; whether rescuer was known to patient; role of family members in the cardiac arrest event.

**The Support after cardiac arrest web resource is a collaborative initiative involving Save a Life Cymru, Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust and the Resuscitation Council UK.

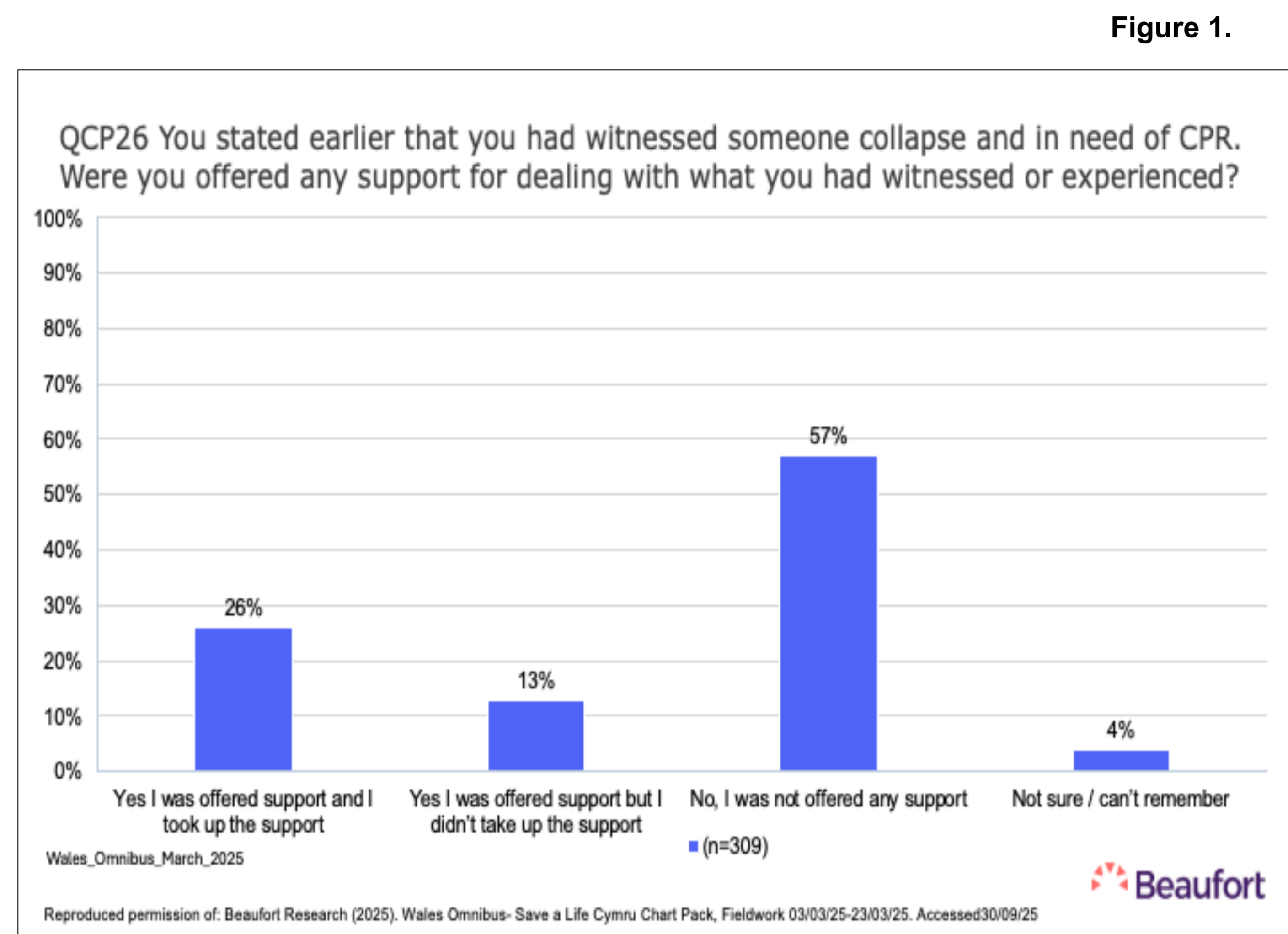


Figure 2.

Support after cardiac arrest

Welcome to Resuscitation Council UK's (RCUK) dedicated support page for anyone affected by cardiac arrest.

At RCUK, we believe that everyone has the right to make their best possible recovery after experiencing cardiac arrest.

We have identified appropriate resources compiled from clinical research and the experiences of those affected by cardiac arrest, to support you wherever you are on your recovery journey.

- Cardiac arrest survivor support: Resources for survivors of cardiac arrest.
- Bystanders and families (co-survivors) support: Resources for co-survivors of cardiac arrest.
- Children and young person (12-35 years) support: Resources for young survivors of cardiac arrest.
- Responder support: Resources for healthcare professionals who have responded to cardiac arrest.

<https://www.resus.org.uk/public-resource/support-after-cardiac-arrest>

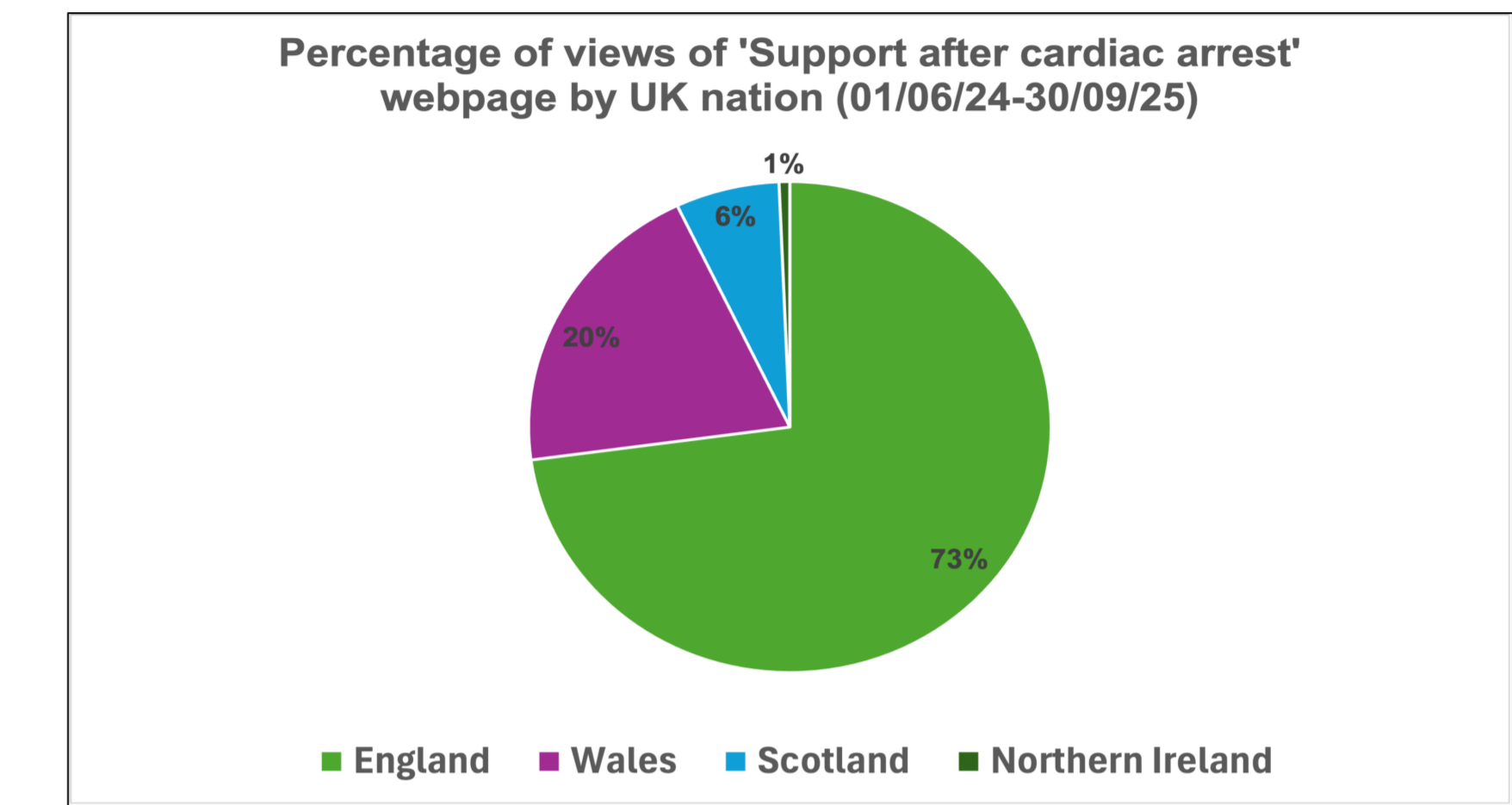


Figure 4.

Support for You

Have you witnessed or performed CPR?

Are you a cardiac arrest survivor or family member?

0808 8021234
BHF Heart Help line (Weekdays 9am-5pm)
resus.org.uk/support-after-ca

RESULTS

During the timeframe investigated, **14 cardiac arrest patients (n=9 OHCA; n=4 in-hospital cardiac arrest; n=1 unknown)** received Cardiac Rehabilitation.

- 50% of these patients had family members** who had either; **witnessed and/ or performed CPR, witnessed defibrillation and/ or used a defibrillator**, in their respective cardiac arrest events.
- 6 of the OHCA patients, knew their rescuer.**
- 19 support cards were allocated to the OHCA patients** for distribution to their rescuers and other family members affected by their cardiac arrest.
- 8 support cards were allocated to patients who had an in-hospital cardiac arrest.**
- Over 1/3 (n=27) of all support cards (n=76) allocated in Wales during the service improvement period were given out by Cardiac Rehabilitation Teams in BCUHB.

CONCLUSION/ NEXT STEPS

Cardiac Rehabilitation and OHCA survivors are key, timely touchpoints to signposting patients, families and rescuers to support. Patients, family members and supporters experiencing cardiac arrest in hospital also require support. Challenges exist, however, regarding reaching those patients, family members and rescuers affected by cardiac arrest who do not have access to Cardiac Rehabilitation.

Further work is underway in Wales, as part of a wider quality improvement project, to assess other key touchpoints in health care and community contexts to engage with 'Elusive Good Samaritans' and those with lived experience of cardiac arrest (i.e. survivors; family members; supporters; rescuers). This work is being undertaken to better understand the support needs of this unique population, and to facilitate timely signposting to support resources.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCE
1. Dainty, Katie N et al. "Understanding the Importance of the Lay Responder Experience in Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association." *Circulation* vol. 145,17 (2022): e852-e867. doi:10.1161/CIR.0000000000001054