

Policy Briefing – Department for Education’s Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Rollout

October, 2022

Request for one ‘public-access’ defibrillator, where possible, per state school.

Key Recommendations:

- That the Secretary of State for Education requests each school offer, where possible, at least one public-access defibrillator.
- Target public-access devices for high-risk areas first.
- Encourage schools to register their Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) with local Emergency Medical Services via [The Circuit](#).

The Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) welcomes the Department for Education’s (DfE) plan to rollout at least one defibrillator to every state school without a device.

[Evidence](#) shows that accessing a device within 3-5 minutes of a cardiac arrest increases the chance of survival by over 40%. [A recent study](#) found that Schools with [public-access](#) devices could be effective in treating over two thirds of OHCA within five minutes.

RCUK would like to ask the Secretary of State to request each school offer, where possible, at least one public-access defibrillator. Without an increase in the number of public access devices within schools, there is a risk of rolling out thousands of devices that may become inaccessible for many ‘Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrests’ (OHCAs) within the local community.

The Department for Education has committed to funding at least one device on-site, or more for schools with larger

premises. We would like the DfE to work alongside the Department for Health & Social Care and relevant public health bodies, to request, where possible, at least one public-access device per school. In making this request, we believe the DfE project can achieve greater coverage and increase the number of devices available to the public.

In England, survival from an OHCA remains low. One major reason so few people survive is that defibrillation is not provided quickly enough. The victim’s chance of survival falls by about 10% with every minute that defibrillation is delayed.

The rollout of more public-access devices in schools offers a huge opportunity for the Department to shorten the time ‘from collapse to first shock’ in local community

“Without more public-access devices outside school gates, communities will be left with little access to life-saving devices outside of school hours. This will negatively impact the chances of survival for a victim of cardiac arrest within the local area”.

James Cant, CEO, RCUK

and school settings. Publicly available defibrillators will save the lives of pupils, staff, and the wider community.

Saving more lives

37.3% of 'all-location' cardiac arrests occur within 300m of a school. And for every one arrest that takes place in a school, [data](#) tells us to expect more than 100 incidents within 300m of a school.

Restricted access to defibrillators critically diminishes chances of survival from cardiac arrest. There have been tragic cases [reported](#) where locked devices in schools have prevented early defibrillation. [Research suggests](#) improving public-access of AEDs within a school setting can significantly increase their overall use.

Placing more public-access AEDs outside of school gates is not only likely to be cost-effective, but it will also save more lives. Given that AED usage rates in England are at [2.3%](#), the evidence for increasing the use of public-access devices in schools is overwhelming.

Target public-access devices for high-risk areas first

Public-access defibrillation (PAD) is most needed in areas of high OHCA incidence. However, [research](#) indicates that across England there is often a mismatch between AED density and OHCA incidence.

In England, AEDs are currently disproportionately placed in more affluent areas, with a lower residential population density. This contrasts with poorer parts of the country where incidence of cardiac arrest is higher.

Implementation must take place in the areas that matters most. By targeting areas of poor health and high OHCA incidence, the rollout of greater numbers of public access devices outside of schools can increase community survival rates.

A targeted rollout will achieve both an increase in the awareness of CPR and AED use in the areas where it matters most, as well as increasing the chances of survival rates in these areas.

Encourage schools to register AEDs with local Emergency Medical Services.

Resuscitation Council UK is proud to partner with the British Heart Foundation, St John Ambulance, and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives on '[The Circuit](#)'.

As part of this programme, we would like to see the Department for Education encourage schools to register their AEDs with local Emergency Medical Services. If the device is registered on the Circuit, the call-handler can direct rescuers to fetch it when they call for help.

This will decrease the time to defibrillation. The Circuit also alerts you when consumables need to be replaced so the device can always be rescue ready.

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To learn more about the Circuit and how Schools can register their new public-access defibrillator, head to <https://www.thecircuit.uk/>

About us

Resuscitation Council UK is saving lives by developing guidelines, influencing policy, delivering courses and supporting cutting-edge research. Through education, training and research, we're working towards the day when everyone in the country has the skills they need to save a life.