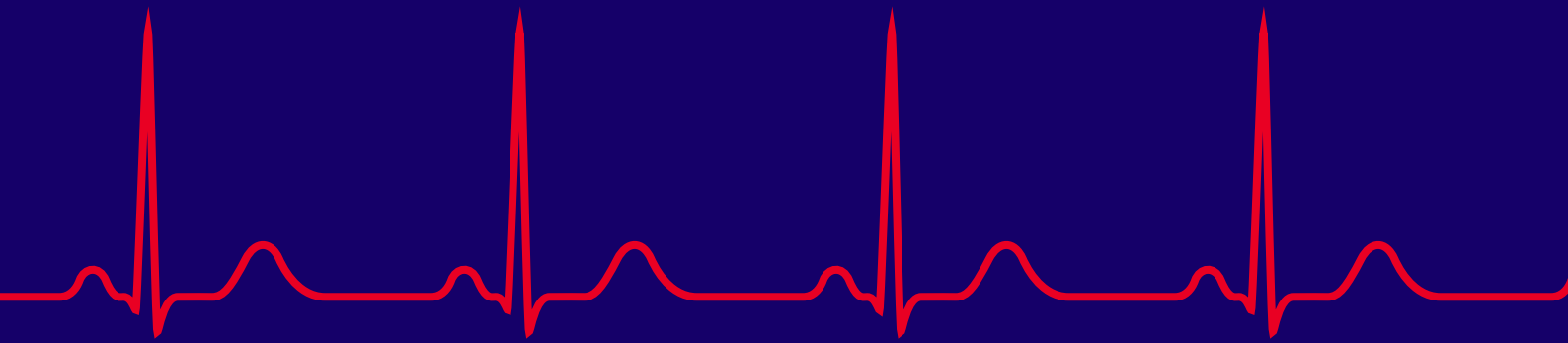


Resuscitation Council UK manifesto: Saving lives from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in Scotland



Despite significant advances in resuscitation science and increased bystander CPR, the survival rate from an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) remains low in Scotland, with approximately 1 in 10 surviving – lagging behind comparable countries worldwide. We can, and we must, do better.

The upcoming Holyrood election presents a vital opportunity to drive up cardiac arrest survival rates in Scotland to be among the best in the world and reduce inequalities in resuscitation. A person's ethnicity, where they work, or where they live should not determine their likelihood of surviving a cardiac arrest, nor affect the quality of care they receive. With health and education devolved to the Scottish Government, targeted actions can build on the current [Government's OHCA Strategy \(2021–2026\)](#) and the strategy that follows it to save more lives.

Creating a CPR-trained society will save more lives, improve public health, and enhance community resilience during emergencies. The Scottish Government can achieve this by building on their work with Save a Life for Scotland (SALFS) and partners in the resuscitation community. This manifesto by [Resuscitation Council UK \(RCUK\)](#) explains how this vision can be achieved by outlining the next steps in Scotland's journey to improving from OHCA.

Priorities for improving survival from OHCA in the next Holyrood term:

- ✓ **All cardiac arrest survivors to access appropriate, ongoing, personalised support:** RCUK calls on the Scottish Government to establish a formal aftercare pathway for cardiac arrest survivors in the next Holyrood term. Our policy paper, *The Weakest Link: Recovering from Cardiac Arrest*, sets out recommendations for government, MSPs, health systems, and the voluntary sector, using [RCUK's Survivor Quality Standard](#) as a blueprint.

Survival alone is not enough. Many survivors are left with long term, and often unseen, physical and psychological effects. Unlike stroke or heart attack rehabilitation, there is currently no standardised pathway in Scotland. A consistent, comprehensive approach, from physical rehabilitation to psychological support would improve quality of life, reduce hospital readmissions, and help survivors regain independence. This builds on existing resources, such as [RCUK's support after cardiac arrest](#) discharge resource, supported by NHS Scotland.

- ✓ **Make CPR training in schools mandatory:** [Nearly 4 in 10 students](#) haven't received CPR training at school, despite every local authority committing to teaching CPR to secondary school pupils. RCUK calls on the Scottish Government to work with local authorities to provide clear guidance and signpost [free teaching resources](#). Supporting schools to deliver CPR training effectively, particularly in underserved communities, will empower young people across Scotland to become lifesavers and reduce health inequalities.

- ✓ **Continue supporting 'Restart a Heart' through Save a Life for Scotland:** Every October, RCUK leads Restart a Heart (RSAH) month to increase survival from OHCA by improving CPR awareness and education. RCUK asks the Scottish Government to continue supporting Save a Life for Scotland in delivering RSAH activities across Scotland, including the annual [Restart a Heart Live event](#), which teaches students and wider communities CPR during a 24-hour livestream. These initiatives ensure communities have the opportunity to learn lifesaving skills, contribute to raising bystander CPR rates, and promote equity in resuscitation across the country.

RCUK also calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that Save a Life for Scotland is equipped with the appropriate resources to continue and further develop their important work. Sustained investment in these programmes will ensure that communities have the opportunity to learn lifesaving skills.

- ✓ **Continue to collect and utilise OHCA data:** Data saves lives. Routine collection of comprehensive data to identify and target hotspot areas is essential for tackling inequalities. National OHCA registries drive success worldwide. The Scottish Government must continue supporting and enhancing data collection within existing frameworks, such as the [Scottish Government's OHCA Strategy \(2021-2026\)](#), and ensure that the data also informs the strategy that follows. Robust data enables analysis, reporting, benchmarking, and continuous improvement, driving targeted policies and better outcomes across Scotland.

- ✓ **Support partners to continue the national expansion of CAREzones across Scotland:** CAREzones (Cardiac Arrest Rescue Zones) are community-led, data-driven initiatives that train local volunteers, improve access to defibrillators by ensuring they are registered on [The Circuit](#), and strengthen the immediate response to cardiac arrest before an ambulance arrives. As part of this data-driven approach, the Scottish Government could also encourage local areas to use [PADmap](#) to optimise the placement of defibrillators and ensure they are located where they can have the greatest impact.

RCUK welcomes the Scottish Government's [recent announcement](#) of new investment to strengthen community response to cardiac arrest, including the creation of additional CARE Zones and plans to drive national implementation. Building on the successful model in Dumfries & Galloway, the Scottish Government should continue and accelerate the expansion of CARE Zones across Scotland by supporting partners such as the Scottish Ambulance Service, local authorities, NHS boards, and community groups to roll out the model consistently. Expanding this approach, particularly in rural, remote, and high-inequality areas, will reduce geographical health inequalities in emergency response and increase survival from OHCA.