



Consensus statement: Universal mandate for defibrillators in vehicles

Proposals have been raised to make automated external defibrillators (AEDs) mandatory standard equipment in all new vehicles, but the unified consensus among leading UK health and resuscitation organisations does not support this.

Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK), the British Heart Foundation (BHF), and St John Ambulance (SJA) agree that a blanket mandate would exacerbate health inequalities and divert vital funds from more effective, proven lifesaving measures. All parties agree that targeting education and greater access to public access automatic defibrillators (PADs) would have a greater impact on survival and help lower health inequalities.

The overriding priority for increasing defibrillator availability remains the widespread provision of public access defibrillators (PADs) in fixed, known locations, registered on The Circuit and available 24 hours a day. This model ensures equitable community access, emergency service integration and reliable device maintenance.

While voluntary carriage of AEDs by specific motorists, such as rural drivers or community responders, is supported, an immediate focus on equipping every new car is not recommended. Further data is required to determine how such a policy would help reduce inequalities in resuscitation.

Practicality and rescue readiness

A private vehicle mandate relies on individual motorists managing battery replacements, pad expiry dates and regular status checks. PADs have a registered guardian, supported by The Circuit, to achieve this.

Temperatures inside parked vehicles, both hot and cold, frequently exceed safe operational limits, risking device failure, and there is no way to ensure this risk is managed.

Areas of shared alignment

Equipping public transport, taxis, commercial fleets and all emergency vehicles would be highly beneficial when combined with training.

All three organisations support incorporating CPR and defibrillator awareness into the driving theory test.