

P-06-1230 Every Second Counts: Install a defibrillator at every school in Wales for the public to access

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 10 Ionawr 2022
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Reference: SR21/1434-6

Petition Number: P-06-1230

Petition title: Every Second Counts: Install a defibrillator at every school in Wales for the public to access

Text of petition:

A lot of people do not know where their closest defibrillator is.

If a defibrillator is installed outside every school on a perimeter gate/fence/wall then everyone will know that if they need a defibrillator, they only need to look for their closest school to get access.

Access should not be restricted to devices at locations only when the establishment is open. Public access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is essential.



1. Background

The British Heart Foundation's [Wales factsheet](#) (July 2021) highlights the following:

Cardiac arrest is a critical medical emergency, where the heart stops pumping blood around the body. Unless treated immediately, it leads to death within minutes.

- There are around 2,800 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in Wales each year.
- Just 1 in 20 survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) in Wales.
- Every minute without cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation reduces the chance of survival by up to 10 per cent.
- Performing CPR can more than double the chances of survival in some cases (ventricular fibrillation).
- It's estimated that public-access defibrillators (PADs) are used in less than 10 per cent of OHCA's.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government published its [Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest plan](#) in June 2017. This states that raising public awareness is paramount in ensuring early recognition and prompt intervention in OHCA. It notes that immediate initiation of bystander CPR can double or quadruple survival from OHCA, while the use of a defibrillator within 3-5 minutes of collapse can significantly improve survival rates.

The plan includes the following key outcomes and actions:

- Defibrillators are readily available and accessible to the public.
- Public are aware defibrillators are easy to use and can do no harm.
- Work collaboratively to ensure all defibrillators are mapped to increase accessibility and availability.
- Ensure clear protocols and procedures are in place so defibrillators are available for operational use at all times.

On 15 October 2021, the Welsh Government issued a [statement on progress](#) in implementing the Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest plan. This notes that

The placement of defibrillators in communities has historically been decided by those who purchase them. The Wales Cardiac Network, in

collaboration with the Welsh Ambulance Service, has plotted the location of all registered defibrillators in Wales. This information, together with data about the location of every out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, indicates that a more strategic view needs to be considered when new defibrillators are purchased.

The statement highlights that:

- The [Save a Life Cymru](#) programme (this brings together organisations across Wales to help develop the public's CPR and defibrillation skills) is recruiting a clinical out-of-hospital cardiac arrest programme manager to develop a framework to oversee the location and management of defibrillators, and is also recruiting seven Save a Life Cymru community coordinators.
- Communities and organisations which already have defibrillators are being encouraged to register them on [The Circuit](#) (this is the national defibrillator network which provides a national overview of defibrillator locations).
- While more than 5,420 defibrillators in Wales are registered, just under 50% of these are registered with guardians to make sure there are regular checks on batteries and pads.
- Further funding of £500,000 was announced on 15 September 2021 to purchase almost 500 more defibrillators. Community groups and organisations will be able to apply to obtain a device from Save a Life Cymru.

The Welsh Government's response to the Petitions Committee also highlights the work of Save a Life Cymru, and emphasises the need for defibrillators to be registered. It highlights an [online mapping tool](#) which can be used to search the locations of defibrillators by postcode or town/city.

Specifically in respect of schools, the Welsh Government response states:

Whilst it could be appropriate for defibrillators to be based outside school buildings, this might not always be the best option and I believe that it is more important that this equipment is based in an area identified locally as the most easily accessible to the public.

3. Welsh Parliament action

On 15 September 2021, there was a Welsh Conservatives [debate on access to defibrillators](#) in Plenary.

In July 2015, the Fourth Assembly published a [report](#) on its consideration of petition P-04-471: Mandatory Welsh legislation to ensure Defibrillators in all public places.

The Welsh Government's [response](#) to this report is also available.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.