

Introduce legislation where it is mandatory to have an defibrillator in workplaces and sport clubs

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 13 Mai 2024
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Reference: SR24/7752-1

Petition Number: [P-06-1384](#)

Petition title: Introduce legislation where it is mandatory to have an defibrillator in workplaces and sport clubs.

Text of petition:

A defibrillator is a device designed to save lives in emergency situations. It plays a crucial role in providing immediate care to individuals experiencing a cardiac arrest. During such a medical emergency, time is of the essence, and the presence of a defibrillator can be the difference between life and death. Research has shown that with the use of a defibrillator, survival rates are increased to 50 – 70%. These devices are user-friendly and can be operated by individuals with minimal training.

With the addition of this legislation, people in work places and sport clubs will have increased coverage of a bystander defibrillator and therefore increasing survival rates of anyone in close proximity suffering from a cardiac arrest.



1. Background

British Heart Foundation's [Wales factsheet](#) highlights that:

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

2. Welsh Government action

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

The OHCA plan's key outcomes and actions include:

- Actively promoting CPR training and how to use a defibrillator.
- 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.

[Save a Life Cymru](#) (SaLC) was established in 2019 by Welsh Government to:

- Make sure that people know what to do if an OHCA happens.
- Increase the number of people who are willing to give CPR a go.
- Increase the public's understanding of defibrillators.
- Make sure that everyone's chance of surviving an OHCA is the same across Wales.

In July 2021 the Welsh Government announced a funding programme of almost £2.5 million over three years to help improve survival rates after cardiac arrest. The aim of the programme included raising awareness about the cardiac arrest chain of survival; funding new educational and training resources; educating people in Wales about helping anyone suffering an OHCA and help develop their skills and confidence in providing CPR and defibrillation; and improving public access to defibrillators.

On 15 October 2021 the Welsh Government issued a progress statement on implementing the OHCA plan. It noted that:

- The OHCA plan was developed to improve OHCA outcomes in Wales.
- SaLC is bringing together organisations across Wales to help develop CPR and defibrillation skills.
- Communities and organisations which already have defibrillators are encouraged to register them on the Circuit (a national defibrillator network providing a national overview of where defibrillators can be found).
- Further funding of £500,000 was announced on 15 September 2021 to purchase almost 500 more defibrillators (Welsh Government announced a further £500,000 on 25 February 2022).

In response to this petition, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care confirmed:

- More than 8,000 defibrillators are registered on The Circuit, doubling the number since 2019.
- SaLC has been instrumental in encouraging the installation, use and support of public access defibrillators by appointing community co-ordinators for every area of Wales; the first UK nation to have created these “influential community roles”.

The Cabinet Secretary said that Welsh Government fully supported making lifesaving equipment, such as defibrillators, more accessible in communities across Wales saying it had adopted a “supportive approach” to make defibrillators become “established and normalised across Wales”. She added:

The issue has been raised by the Petitions Committee previously and the Welsh Government’s position remains unchanged – we do not believe introducing legislation to mandate the provision of defibrillators is the best way to increase the number of devices that are available. Legislation could be counter-productive, difficult to enforce, and add unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In July 2015, the Fourth Assembly Petitions Committee published a report on its consideration of a petition calling for mandatory Welsh legislation to ensure defibrillators in all public places (P-04-471). The Welsh Government response noted its development of the OHCA plan which it said would correlate with the themes of the Committee's recommendations.

On 15 September 2021, there was a Welsh Conservatives debate on access to defibrillators in Plenary.

In January and March 2022, the Petitions Committee considered a petition, 'Every Second Counts: Install a defibrillator at every school in Wales for the public to access' (P-06-1230). In response to the petition, the Welsh Government clarified that it had previously provided funding to access defibrillators, it was considering a further round of funding, and that Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust had previously contacted schools to offer defibrillators.

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.