

PE2101/A: Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland

Minister for Public Health and Women's Health submission, 4 June 2024

In response to PE2101, the Scottish Government would first like to thank Peter Earl and others at Troqueer Primary School for their fundraising to purchase and place a defibrillator. In doing so, they have played a vital part in improving survival from Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA) in Scotland.

The committee may be aware that the Scottish Government is a key partner in the Save a Life for Scotland partnership, which is responsible for the delivery of the [Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest strategy 2021 to 2026](#). This includes the aim of increasing the percentage of OHCA which have a defibrillator applied before the arrival of the ambulance service to 20%.

To achieve this aim, the Save a Life for Scotland partnership is working to build the evidence base to support defibrillator guardians to make strategic decisions about the placement of their defibrillators, to encourage their registration with Scottish Ambulance Service and to increase public confidence and knowledge around defibrillation.

Mr Earl notes in his petition that *'we do have a local defibrillator but we discovered it was too far away to have a positive impact on anybody who might suffer a cardiac arrest at our school'*. We agree that the strategic placement of defibrillators is important to maximise their impact. A body of international evidence shows that the current approach in many countries to defibrillator placement results in over-provision in areas of lower risk.

To address this, the Research Resuscitation Group at Edinburgh University, supported by funding from the Scottish Government, is developing a tool (SCOT-PAD) to support organisations and communities with more evidence on the optimal location to place their defibrillator to increase its potential impact.

With regard to the Petition's main request – that the Scottish Government provide Primary and Secondary Schools with Automated External Defibrillators, I should explain that the Scottish Government does not routinely provide funding for defibrillators, though a number of other organisations do provide advice and support for the purchasing and maintenance of defibrillators.

This includes:

- The British Heart Foundation - [Defibrillator funding for your local community - BHF](#)
- St Johns Scotland - [Public Access Community Defibrillators | St John Scotland](#).

Decisions on the installation and maintenance of defibrillators in schools is a matter for Local Authorities to consider at the local level. Funding for Local Authorities is provided through the annual block grant settlement from the Scottish Government and they should use funding resources allocated to them in the manner which they believe will best meet local needs and circumstances within their respective areas.

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