

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

Minister for Public Health and Women's Health written submission, 8 October 2024

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 2024, in which you ask whether the Scottish Government will provide direct funding for primary and secondary schools to purchase and install defibrillators, following consideration of Petition 2101, *Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland*, by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee.

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering the aim included in the [Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021 to 2026](#) to increase the percentage of out of hospital cardiac arrests which have a defibrillator applied before the arrival of the ambulance service to 20%. Rather than funding the purchase of defibrillators directly, we work to deliver this aim by participating in the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership to support partners to ensure defibrillators are placed strategically and to co-create local solutions to improve rates of survival.

Local authorities make decisions on purchasing, installing and maintaining defibrillators for the schools in their area. As you are aware, local authorities are funded 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.

We work as part of the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership to ensure that when local authorities or other organisations purchase defibrillators, they have access to the information they need to ensure they are installed in the place they will have the most impact. International evidence shows that in many countries defibrillators are not placed strategically, resulting in too many devices being placed in areas of lower risk.

The Scottish Government and St John Scotland have funded the Resuscitation Research Group to develop a tool, PADmap, to support organisations and communities with evidence on the best location to place their defibrillator to maximise its impact. PADmap is in the final stages of development and will be free for anyone in Scotland to use.

As well as supporting people to install their defibrillators in the most effective location, the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership also works with local authorities to co-create other local solutions to improve out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival.

Prompt defibrillation is just one important factor in increasing a person's chances of survival from cardiac arrest; other aspects including prompt bystander CPR are also vital. Save a Life for Scotland's work in this area includes increasing the provision of CPR and defibrillator awareness training, and encouraging the use of [GoodSAM](#), an app to crowdsource volunteer responders to help in instances of out of hospital cardiac arrest.

The solutions to improving survival from cardiac arrest may differ in each area and the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership takes a data-driven approach to working with local authorities to understand the chain of survival in their areas and how to improve it.

I hope this further information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Jenni Minto MSP