



More defibrillators in schools – a lifesaving improvement

The Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) [shared](#) a release last week from the [Department for Education](#) that announced millions of children, teachers and parents in England now have access to lifesaving defibrillators in their schools. In their press release, DoE said that 20,376 defibrillators have successfully been delivered to 17,862 state-funded schools, and the Government is also supporting schools in making defibrillators available to the community, with 1,200 external heated defibrillator cabinets being provided to primary and special schools by the end of 2023 in areas of deprivation, where provision is generally lower.



Defibrillators are thankfully becoming more of a common site in our workplaces and on our high streets and leisure venues, and this along with secondary school pupils being taught life-saving methods such as CPR as part of existing requirements for schools to teach first aid as part of the curriculum, means that chances of surviving cardiac arrest for all state school pupils, teachers and visitors to schools, and hopefully those in our communities have risen dramatically.

The task now is to make sure defibrillators are accessible (either within a school or venue, or to the wider community as appropriate), regularly checked, and registered with the local ambulance service so that they can be used when needed.

What are PAD's and AED's?



Essentially the same.

Public Access Defibrillators (PAD's) are most commonly Automated External Defibrillators (AED's) that are placed in publicly accessible locations, such as bus stations, community halls or sports venues where they can be accessed by members of the public in the even of an out of hospital cardiac arrest nearby.

Why are AED's in the community lifesavers?

Sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of premature death. In the UK, there are approximately 60,000 cardiac arrests annually. Resuscitation is attempted in only about half of these, but fewer than 1 in 10 survive.

In a cardiac arrest the heart's steady rhythm is often replaced by disorganised electrical activity, and AED's can be used to deliver an electric shock to the heart so that the normal, organised, electrical rhythm of the heart has the opportunity to restart.

Conditions for defibrillation are only optimal during the first few minutes after a cardiac arrest, although this period can be extended if a bystander starts cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), particularly chest compressions. For this reason, having community defibrillators available in workplaces, schools, leisure venues and high streets increases the chances of successful defibrillation and survival from cardiac arrest.

You don't need to be trained to use an AED.

AEDs are compact, portable, easy to use, safe and very effective. They are designed to be used by anyone, whether or not they have any prior knowledge or had formal training.

Once switched on they guide you through the steps with voice prompts, images, video or a combination of all three. Pads come with picture of where to attach them to the chest.



An AED will not allow a shock to be given unless the collapsed person needs one. Untrained members of the public have saved many lives, so lack of training should not deter people from using an AED.

However, many people are understandably still very nervous about using an AED, saying that they wouldn't attempt to use an AED, even if they know that it's designed to be used without training.

Act Fast Clinical includes the use of an AED on all of our first aid courses & also now [offer a short \(2 hour\) course](#) to familiarise users with an AED and combining it with CPR, showing how easy they are to use.

Where an AED is located can be crucial



As they must be accessible without delay, AEDs should be placed where they are most likely to be needed, in a prominent position, with clear signs to direct people to them. AED's may be required or advised under sporting bodies guidance, along with a recommended time that they should be available if someone collapses during sport.

Any delay in fetching an AED or delay caused by having to get a code to open a locked AED cabinet will reduce the chance of saving a life.

AED's don't need annual maintenance.

Unlike many other medical devices, AED's don't need regular maintenance. They all perform internal self-diagnostic checks (normally daily) and will show on a readiness indicator if there is a problem. However, AED's should be inspected regularly to make sure they are ready to be used in an emergency.

Most manufacturers recommend that AED's should be checked monthly to make sure batteries remain with sufficient charge, pads are in date (this can also help making sure that replacements are ordered before they go out of date), and that no errors have been detected during self-tests.

Act Fast Clinical has a [range of resources available](#) to make sure that defibrillators are checked regularly, and these checks are recorded for other to see. Both for compliance, but also peace of mind, making sure that an AED is ready for use when it's needed.



As part of our schools' medication and first aid audit, we also include your arrangements for location and signage for AED's follows best practice and offer advice and recommendations around being as ready as you can be.