



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Health

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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

28.4.2022

Dear *George*,

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 March to Sajid Javid about access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs). I apologise for the delay in replying.

I read the correspondence with care and appreciate your concerns. This is an important issue and it is right to raise it with the Government. I would like to reassure you that the treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease is a priority for the Government. Access to defibrillators is an important part of that commitment.

There are extensive existing and planned measures taken by the Government, NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE&I), and other stakeholders in relation to improving survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest through the use of defibrillators and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

As part of the *NHS Long Term Plan*, NHSE&I will work with its partners to improve community first response and build defibrillator networks to increase the number of people who survive out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. The plan notes that fast and effective action will help save the lives of people suffering a cardiac arrest and advises that a national network of community first responders and defibrillators will help save up to 4,000 lives each year by 2028. This will be supported by educating the general public, including people of school age, about how to recognise and respond to cardiac arrest.

The Government takes the installation of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in public settings very seriously. We recognise that better provision of defibrillators and increasing the number of people trained in CPR could help save more lives when people have a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital setting. We therefore encourage organisations to consider purchasing public access defibrillators (PADs) as part of their first aid equipment, particularly in places where there are high concentrations of people.

With growing public awareness and acceptance of AEDs, many community defibrillators have been provided in public locations through National Lottery funding, community fundraising schemes, workplace funding, and by charities. Defibrillators are normally located in workplaces and public spaces like airports, shopping centres, community centres and railway stations.

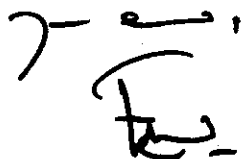
There is currently no legal requirement for schools to purchase an AED, but the Government encourages them to do so as part of their first aid equipment. Since May

2019, the Government has required all contractors refurbishing or building new schools through centrally delivered programmes to provide at least one AED.

There is ongoing work to improve public access to defibrillators in emergencies. The British Heart Foundation has been working in partnership with the Resuscitation Council UK, the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives and the NHS to set up the Circuit, the national defibrillator network. The Circuit provides a national database of where defibrillators can be found, enabling ambulance services to identify the nearest defibrillator at the time of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. There are currently over 33,200 defibrillators registered across ambulance services in all areas of the UK.

NHSE&I and St John Ambulance are also working to increase awareness of the importance of CPR. They will provide face-to-face and virtual training to develop the skills required to use AEDs in community settings, supported by CPR skills.

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Argar', written in a cursive style.

EDWARD ARGAR MP