

St John Scotland submission of 29 May 2023

PE1989/E: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces

The Order of St John has a presence in more than 40 countries around the world, and delivers its charitable activities through national St John organisations, including St John Scotland (SC047485) in Scotland, St John Ambulance in England, and many others across the world.

Everything we do is about creating a caring Scotland, where more of us will survive a health crisis to live longer, and better. Our volunteers deliver our core services:

- Free Patient Transport for renal and oncology treatment
- Helping communities install Public Access Defibrillators
- Free Bystander CPR training, including how to use a defibrillator
- Community First Responders supporting the Scottish Ambulance Service

Thank you for inviting us to respond to PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces. We will outline how our PAD programme works and what drives our decision-making, development and the most frequent challenges.

St John Scotland Community Defibrillators Programme

Every week in Scotland, around 70 people have a cardiac arrest at home, work or in a public place.

Starting CPR as soon as possible will give the person the best chance of survival, but being able to use a defibrillator within the first few minutes of collapse increases that chance even further.

That's why St John Scotland works with communities across Scotland to increase the availability of Public Access Defibrillators. Last year we supported 158 communities throughout Scotland to install an AED in their local area.

The [Save A Life For Scotland network](#) and [OHCA Strategy](#) greatly inform the principles of our programme.

Through our Community Defibrillator Scheme, we will:

- work with community groups to establish the best location for a defibrillator in their local area
- set community groups a fundraising target of £1,000 for a defibrillator and external storage cabinet, where St John Scotland covers the remaining equipment costs - usually £400-£500
- offer advice and support around the installation
- offer free Bystander CPR and defibrillator training in the community after installation

We have increasingly found businesses coordinating a campaign on behalf of their community and we support this providing the defibrillator is to be Public Access.

When assessing an application for support to install a Public Access Defibrillator, our volunteers work with the community group to identify:

- Nearest PADs
 - Registered on The Circuit – via defibfinder.uk
 - Not yet registered on The Circuit – via local knowledge
- Proposed location, reasoning and accessibility
- SIMD area – simd.scot
- Nearest A&E Dept
- Cabinet requested – unlocked or reason for locked
- Commitment to installation by a qualified electrician
- ongoing ownership and guardianship including regular checks and replacing consumables as required
- Commitment to Bystander CPR training for their wider community
- Pledged fundraising, or request for help to organise a suitable event

24/7 Access

St John Scotland agrees with the [Resuscitation Council UK's consensus](#) that external AED cabinets should be unlocked, wherever possible. This saves vital time when retrieving a defibrillator and does not require a secondary 999 call to be told the access code.

Although some community groups have concerns about vandalism or theft, we cite community engagement as the key to mitigating that risk. The Bystander CPR and Defib awareness session our volunteers offer is advertised to the local community. In these sessions, it is explained that without intervention, someone having a cardiac arrest will not survive. Coupled with high-profile cardiac arrests in the sporting world and beyond, St John Scotland is committed to help educate people that defibs could save your or someone you know's life.

The Circuit

The Circuit is the national defibrillator network and provides the NHS ambulance services with vital information about defibrillators across the UK so 999 call handlers can direct bystanders to the nearest PAD. As part of our application form, we ask all community groups to commit to take guardianship by adding and maintaining their PAD on The Circuit.

We provide literature from The Circuit including a '[Guide to being a Defib Guardian](#)' and '[The Guardian's guide to The Circuit](#)' to help community groups understand what is required, the importance of what they do, and how to do it.

Our volunteers use defibfinder.uk which shows the status of defibs on The Circuit. Our local volunteers are working within their communities to identify defibs which are not on The Circuit yet and looking for optimum locations for new PADs.

Costs – both initial and ongoing

The initial fundraising target of £1000 is unattainable by some community groups. In these instances, St John Scotland provides support to set up online campaigns or with advice on events which can be run at low cost.

SJS provide at least 25% of funding, with the community group raising the remaining 75% of the cost to St John Scotland for equipment. This

works out at a 60% saving if the Community Group bought one from a supplier outright. On a case-by-case basis, SJS can donate more to facilitate the installation, including from local Volunteer Committees' funds.

Ongoing costs are becoming more of a concern to community groups as batteries and replacement pads increase in price. In addition, the electricity cost to maintain the temperature and lighting of the cabinet continues to rise in line with other energy costs.

Training defibrillators are zero-rated for VAT due to their status as medical training equipment, however live defibrillators are still subject to 20% VAT for community groups. With cross-party support of over 50 MSPs from 5 parties, Jenni Minto MSP [wrote to the Chancellor in March 2022](#) calling for VAT on Community Defibrillators to be scrapped and [lodged a motion in the Scottish Parliament](#) in November 2022.

Guardianship

The commitment and responsibility of becoming a Guardian to the defib can be challenging for a community group to pin down. With the help of The Circuit's literature, we explain how this could work and that more than one person in the community can be a guardian. St John Scotland resources for primary-aged children can also help to show how the whole community can get involved in making sure their defib is ready to save a life.

If a guardian moves away, or office-holders change within a community group, there is a risk of the defib going unchecked.

Location

Often a community group who have fundraised for a PAD will request it to be installed on or near their premises. We help community groups understand the best location for their PAD with local research into the [nearest PADs on The Circuit](#) and the [SIMD areas](#) close to them. We will advise if we feel it may be better located elsewhere. For example, instead of across the road from another PAD, a few streets away. We offer dual cabinet branding to help connect this to their original fundraising.

The individual or organisation driving the installation of a PAD is not always the most appropriate location to install one.

As a SALFS partner, we are regularly updated on Dr Gareth Clegg's work as part of the University of Edinburgh Resuscitation Research Group which are analysing the instances of OHCA versus the current placement of PADs as part of their [PADmap Study](#). We look forward to being able to use the tool they are creating to find the optimum location for PADs in local communities, where they are most likely to save a life.

People in the most deprived areas of Scotland are [twice as likely to have an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest](#). Receiving applications or interest from "right" areas, where there isn't already PAD coverage is an ongoing challenge we are seeking to address with local volunteer engagement. When St John Scotland has donations toward the installation of a defibrillator, we identify an area in [SIMD Quintile 1](#) with the help of local volunteers.

Planning

Planning permissions from local authorities differ across the country. Some local authorities are very committed to installing PADs on their premises so they have 24/7 access. Others often refuse and it is hard to have dialogue with them to attempt to address the reasons why.

Community Groups who have fundraised and identified the need for a PAD in their area can have their installation delayed or relocated due to council decisions to approve or deny the installation.

Equipment

There are several defibrillators and cabinets on the market, but we tend to supply the following to our community groups and have a significant discount with our supplier:

- IPAD SP1 Semi Automatic Defibrillator <https://www.ipad-aed.com/ipad-sp1/>
- DefibSafe 2 secure external defibrillator cabinet <https://www.defibsafe.co.uk/>

Bystander CPR training

Any CPR is better than no CPR; without intervention, someone suffering a cardiac arrest will die. Our Bystander CPR sessions show members of the public how they can become part of the [Chain of Survival in the event of cardiac arrest](#).

Our volunteers deliver a 30-minute session covering DR ABCD:

Danger – Response – Airway – Breathing – Compressions – Defibrillator

It includes practical hands-only compressions on a manikin, and the application of a training defibrillator. By delivering the message, that the 999 call handler will talk you through what you need to do, and that once you've switched on the defibrillator it will tell you what to do, it gives members of the public the confidence they could help save someone's life.

Bystander CPR training and resources are also offered to community groups who already have a defib installed, increasing confidence and familiarity so they can help.

In Areas of Scotland where we do not have a Volunteer Committee yet, we can provide virtual training.