



Campaign Briefing

Emergency Life Support skills



What is Emergency Life Support?

Emergency Life Support (ELS) is the set of actions needed to keep someone alive until professional help arrives. It includes performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), dealing with choking, serious bleeding and helping someone who may be having a heart attack.

What are we calling for?

- In England we are calling for ELS, including vital CPR, to be a mandatory part of the National Curriculum.
- In Wales we want to see ELS taught in every school as part of the National Curriculum.
- In Scotland we want to see ELS taught in every school as part of the Curriculum for Excellence.
- In Northern Ireland we want to see further investment aimed at raising awareness of, and access to, ELS skills in schools, workplaces and communities.

ELS is simple, and easy to teach and learn. It can be performed without any special medical knowledge. **It takes as little as two hours to teach, just 0.2% of a school year.** In just two hours of their school life, children can learn the skills to save a life.

Children of 10 years and above can learn the full range of ELS including vital CPR, and younger children are also able to learn many of the skills.¹ Teachers at primary school should be encouraged to teach their children many of the skills including dialling 999, calling for help and checking for danger.

Why is ELS so important?

Evidence shows that around two thirds of cardiac arrests that occur outside of hospital occur in the home, and that nearly half that occur in public are witnessed by bystanders.² With each minute that passes in cardiac arrest before defibrillation, chances of survival are reduced by about 10%.³ Immediate CPR in a shockable out of hospital cardiac arrest can improve the chances of survival by up to a factor of three.⁴

Public support for teaching ELS

In April 2011, we commissioned research to assess the views of children, parents and teachers on the idea of teaching ELS to all secondary school pupils. The results showed strong public support.

OnePoll surveyed 2,072 parents across the UK, and found that 1,449 (70 per cent) thought that children should be taught ELS at school.¹ The support was higher still among children. 1,000 children in the UK aged 11-15 were asked whether they should be taught how to save someone's life in an emergency as part of their lessons at school, and 778 (78 per cent) believed that they should.² Of the 500 teachers in the UK survey, 428 (86 per cent) thought that ELS, including CPR, should be part of the curriculum in schools – only 25 (5 per cent) disagreed.³

¹ Research was carried out online by OnePoll in February/March 2011. Total sample size was 2,072 parents within the UK.

² Research was carried out online by OnePoll in February 2011. Total sample size was 1,000 children aged 11-15 years old in the UK.

³ Research was carried out online by OnePoll in February 2011. Total sample size was 500 teachers in the UK.



ELS isn't just about stats and numbers. It really makes a difference.

Ask Keith Aston. At 69, he suffered a cardiac arrest whilst out riding his bicycle, and was kept alive in the street by a passerby, Joanna Michaelides.

Joanna said of her experience "I am ordinary. I am not one of the many admirable people who dedicate their lives to saving others. I just happened to learn CPR.

When Keith had his cardiac arrest, every person at that scene was desperate to help him. I was just lucky that I could.

"People in the most part have the will to help and not harm. We want as many people as we can to learn ELS. You never know – it could be the difference between life and death."



How would this work in practice?

A number of organisations already successfully provide training and support for teachers so they can deliver ELS. The BHF, for example, spends around £800k per annum on resources for teaching ELS, including manikins, schools pack contents, and teacher supply cover. Community Resuscitation Development Officers (CRDOs), established by the BHF, are developing community resuscitation programmes across their regions within Ambulance Trusts, and deliver ELS training and support to teachers as part of the wider ambulance service response.

Our vision is for every child to leave school knowing how to save a life

We are already behind many of our European neighbours – France, Denmark and Norway all have lifesaving skills such as CPR as a mandatory part of their school curricula. They have been using strategies ranging from self-learning with DVDs and manikins to structured teaching – all as part of the curriculum.⁵ Further afield, a recent statement on science by the American Heart Association concludes that CPR training should be required for graduation from secondary school.⁶



By teaching children ELS at school, we can create **a new generation of lifesavers**. Children learn and retain new skills more easily than adults and are also often present at emergencies.

We all learnt skills as children – how to ride a bike, playing a musical instrument, how to speak a foreign language. Why not add 'How to save a life' to that set of skills?

By teaching all children life-saving skills we can ensure that every child leaves school knowing how to save a life.

Sign the petition and find out how you can email your local politician about the campaign at bhf.org.uk/ELS

¹ Lester C. et al. (1996). Teaching schoolchildren cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Resuscitation, 31(1): 33-38

² Virdi, G. et al (2010). London Ambulance Service Cardiac Arrest Annual Report 2008/09

³ J.P. Nolan et al (2010) European Resuscitation Council Guidelines for Resuscitation 2010 Section 1. Executive summary. Resuscitation 2010;81:1219-76

⁴ Koster RW et al. (2010). European Resuscitation Council Guidelines for Resuscitation 2010 Section 2. Adult basic life support and use of automated external defibrillators. Resuscitation 2010;81:1277-92

⁵ Isbye DL, Rasmussen LS, Ringsted C, Lippert FK. Disseminating cardiopulmonary resuscitation training by distributing 35,000 personal manikins among school children. Circulation 2007;116:1380-85

⁶ Cave DM, Aufderheide TP, Beeson J et al. Importance and implementation of training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillation in schools: A science advisory from the American Heart Association. Circulation 2011 published online