

# Parliamentary Briefing: Public Access to Defibrillators

September 2025

Each year, there are more than 40,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCA) in the UK, **with less than one in ten people surviving**. Thousands of families in the UK are left devastated by cardiac arrest every year. Whilst immediate CPR and defibrillation can more than double the chances of survival in some cases, **public access defibrillators are used in less than 10% of cases**.



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**During a cardiac arrest, every second counts.** However, many defibrillators are not used because emergency services don't know where they are so can't direct members of the public to them.

## What's needed to change this?

- Defibrillators should be installed in an unlocked and publicly accessible place
- All cardiac arrest survivors must access appropriate, ongoing, personalised support

## How you can support these efforts:

- Encourage your constituents who acts as defibrillator guardians to register their device with The Circuit: the national defibrillator network allowing all ambulance services to access the data
- Join our call for the parliamentary defibrillators to be registered on The Circuit

[The Circuit: the national defibrillator network](#), was set up to provide all ambulance services with vital information about defibrillators across the UK so that in those crucial moments after a cardiac arrest, they can be accessed quickly to help save lives. Funded by British Heart Foundation, NHS England, Resuscitation Council UK and St John Ambulance, The Circuit provides live data to the ambulance service dispatch systems, synchronising every 60 seconds.

## Defibrillator guardians should register their device with The Circuit: the national defibrillator network



Less than 1 in 10 people survive an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in the UK

More than 100,000 defibrillators have been registered on The Circuit, but there are estimated to be tens of thousands still unaccounted for across the UK. This means opportunities to help save a life could be missed.

It is crucial to take a data-led approach to understand where defibrillators should be placed. The national view provided by The Circuit means if 999 is called in London, but London call handlers are busy, the call can be diverted to call handlers elsewhere who can locate the nearest defibrillator if registered. By creating a comprehensive map, The Circuit provides data identifying where defibrillators are needed.

**Please consider encouraging your constituents who act as guardians to register their devices.** If the device is registered, the call-handler can direct bystanders to fetch it when they call for help. Registering defibrillators can help more people survive a cardiac arrest, and every single one could be the difference between life and death.

### **Public-access defibrillators should be located in high-risk areas first**

Defibrillators are more needed in areas of high OHCA incidence. Yet research indicates that across the UK, there is a mismatch between defibrillator density and OHCA incidence. At present, **defibrillators are disproportionately placed in more affluent areas**, with a lower residential population density. This contrasts with poorer parts of the country where incidence of cardiac arrest is higher. Targeting public-access devices in areas of poor health and high OHCA incidence, could significantly increase the chances of survival in these communities. BHF's [Community Defibrillator Funding Programme](#), has recently re-opened, inviting applications from areas most in need.

It is also vital bystanders and responders can access the closest defibrillator immediately. Community guardians should place defibrillators in a highly visible and well signposted location to ensure they can be found quickly when needed.

Ideally, they should be easily accessible so that they can be grabbed quickly. If in a cabinet, it should be unlocked. If the cabinet is locked, the access code should be logged on The Circuit.

### **All cardiac arrest survivors must access appropriate, ongoing, personalised support**

Surviving a cardiac arrest can result in a range of physical, neurological, cognitive, emotional, and social issues. At present, too many survivors aren't being assessed for their health and social care needs beyond hospital. Unlike rehabilitation services for a stroke or heart attack, there is no formal care pathway for cardiac arrest survivors. A programme targeted to the individual's needs, can improve quality of life, be cost-effective, and reduce hospital readmissions. Health and care systems across the UK must work in partnership to identify and reduce the gaps in accessing cardiac arrest rehabilitation services.

### **Do you know where the parliamentary defibrillators are located?**

There are 32 defibrillators on the parliamentary estate, but none of them are registered on The Circuit. Doing so would help support the safety of everyone working or visiting the parliamentary estate.

We are calling on Parliamentary authorities to support the registration of defibrillators on the Circuit Network, alongside providing a map in parliamentary offices to signpost bystanders to the nearest defibrillator and necessary first aid equipment in the event of an emergency. We would welcome your support raising this issue in parliament.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

BHF, RCUK and SJA all have CPR resources available to support increasing people's knowledge of responding to cardiac arrest, including [BHF's RevivR digital tool](#), [RCUK's Lifesaver app](#) and [SJA's First aid app](#).