

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Children & Young People's Scrutiny

DATE: 20th January 2022

SUBJECT: Defibrillators in schools

REPORT FROM: Councillor Tariq Tamoor, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

CONTACT OFFICER: Paul Cooke

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report considers the policy and guidance position in respect of the provision of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) in schools, and the extent to which schools are making arrangements for AEDs to be located on school premises.
- 1.2 An AED is a portable electronic machine that can detect the abnormal heart rhythms that are present when someone has a cardiac arrest. When an abnormal rhythm is detected, the machine delivers an electric charge/shock that might be able to restart the heart or establish a regular rhythm. The sooner the heart is restarted, the better the casualty's chance of survival.
- 1.3 An AED is easy to use and safe. It cannot harm the casualty because it detects when shock is needed (irregular heart rhythm) and only works in that situation.
- 1.4 Anyone can use an AED, they do not need to be a medical professional or first aider. The machine will 'speak' instructions that tell the user what to do. It is always better to try to use an AED if someone's heart has stopped than to do nothing.
- 1.5 Defibrillators are now commonly sited in public places, in workplaces, and increasingly in schools.
- 1.6 In 2015, the Council did engage with schools to encourage the provision of AEDs on school premises, providing information in respect of specifications, sources of supply and funding opportunities, including DfE funding that was available at the time.
- 1.7 The Council does not however, maintain a record of devices and where they are located.
- 1.8 There is no specific requirement for a school to provide access to an AED. However, in view of the vital role that AEDs can play in saving the lives of pupils, staff and other users of school premises, the Department for Education now

encourages all schools to consider purchasing these devices as part of their first-aid equipment.

- 1.9 The Department for Education, working with NHS Supply Chain has also negotiated an arrangement for schools to purchase AEDs from them at reduced cost.
- 1.10 The DfE has produced advice and guidance for schools on the provision of AEDs which includes advice on specifications of different devices, purchasing arrangements, advice on the location of devices within the school setting, community access to devices, and training in the use of those devices.
- 1.11 Additionally, each school is required to adopt a policy setting out how it will meet the needs of pupils with medical conditions. The DfE guidance to schools on the development of such a policy makes reference to the important role that AEDs can play, re-inforcing the need for schools to consider the provision of a device as part of its first aid arrangements.
- 1.12 Further, DfE advice and guidance to schools on first aid training for teaching staff now includes a section on the use of AEDs.
- 1.13 Working within the advice and guidance referenced above, it is for each Schools Governing Body to determine whether it wishes to provide an AED on its premises.
- 1.14 The Council does not have a specific policy position with regards AEDs in schools, relying on the national guidance, and recognising that any decision on provision of a device is a matter for each schools Governing Body.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 National guidance to schools clearly promotes the benefits of schools providing AEDs, providing the information, advice and guidance necessary to enable schools to make informed decisions on the siting of devices on their premises.
- 2.2 There is no local policy position advising schools on the siting of devices on their premises, and it is left to individual Governing Bodies to determine if provision is to be made.
- 2.3 There is no central record of AEDs on school premises maintained by the Council or DfE, although schools should notify the ambulance service if they are locating a device on their premises.
- 2.4 There is no central record to demonstrate the use of an AED. Therefore, the impact of siting a device in a school setting is not immediately demonstrable.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information, advice and guidance to schools on the provision and use of Automatic External Defibrillators in schools; that the provision of devices, and the funding for that provision rests with the Governing Body of each schools.

List of Background Papers:-

[Automated external defibrillators \(AEDs\) in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Teacher training: basic first aid - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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Executive Director sign off Date: _____

JET Meeting Date: _____