



Northumberland

County Council

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7TH NOVEMBER 2023

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATORS (AEDs) IN NORTHUMBERLAND: SCOPING REPORT

Purpose of report

The purpose of this scoping report is to outline the scope and objectives of the Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) Task and Finish Group. The group is established to examine key issues related to the availability, maintenance, accessibility, and effectiveness of AEDs within Northumberland. The primary aim is to make recommendations that enhance the availability of AEDs, ultimately improving community health and safety.

Recommendation:

To consider and agree the following:

- **Consider the terms of reference/scope of the review.**
- **Agree a timetable for the review to be completed.**
- **Agree that the findings of the review will be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Key issues

Scrutiny Committees have several key tasks, one of which is to investigate matters of interest and concern to the wider community. As part of this responsibility, the group will investigate the accessibility of AEDs within the county, identifying any gaps and areas that require improvement. This will involve assessing the current distribution of AEDs and their proximity to public spaces, businesses, and residential areas.

Another key issue for the group to address is AED maintenance. Through evaluation of maintenance protocols and practices in place for AEDs the group will ensure their functionality when needed during emergencies. This includes a comprehensive review of maintenance records and the identification of any shortcomings in current practices and funding.

Furthermore, the group will examine the effectiveness of public awareness and education initiatives regarding AEDs, with the aim of understanding the level of community knowledge about AEDs and by assessing whether the public is adequately informed about their usage during cardiac emergencies. Recommendations for enhancing public awareness and education will be a key focus.

Additionally, the Task and Finish Group will review local and national regulations governing AED installation, maintenance, and use. We will evaluate whether these regulations align with best practices and identify any areas where updates or revisions may be necessary to facilitate AED deployment and usage.

Lastly, the integration of AEDs with emergency services and medical response systems will be explored as a key issue. We will investigate successful case studies and best practices for seamless integration to ensure that AEDs are optimally utilised during cardiac emergencies.

Background

Cardiac arrests are a medical emergency characterised by the sudden cessation of the heart's normal rhythm, resulting in the heart either stopping or beating irregularly. This abrupt interruption in cardiac activity leads to the immediate interruption of blood circulation, cutting off the supply of oxygen to vital organs and tissues. NHS figures show that there were more than 84,000 admissions for cardiac arrests in England during 2021/22

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) hold immense significance in the context of cardiac emergencies because they can swiftly analyse a victim's heart rhythm and, if required, deliver an electric shock to restore a normal heartbeat, a process known as defibrillation. Time is a critical factor in determining survival with survival rates dropping 10% with each passing minute without intervention. Immediate initiation of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and, when needed, early defibrillation using an AED are pivotal steps in increasing the chances of survival for cardiac arrest victims.

An AED is a portable electronic device that plays a pivotal role in the treatment of life-threatening cardiac arrests. These devices are designed to be user-friendly and provide voice prompts and visual instructions, making them accessible to individuals, even those with minimal training. AEDs are strategically placed in public areas such as airports, schools, shopping centres, sports facilities, and public transportation hubs. AEDs self-test and indicate when new consumables such as batteries and electrodes pads are required. Pads and batteries require replacing every 2 years or when they are used at a cost of around £100 a time. If an AED goes missing or is damaged it can cost up to £1000 to replace.

Their ease of use and widespread placement in public areas mean that bystanders can potentially save lives by administering defibrillation even before professional medical help arrives on the scene. Rapid access to AEDs in public places is pivotal in increasing the survival rate of individuals experiencing sudden cardiac arrest.

Terms of Reference

The group is established to examine key issues related to the availability, maintenance, accessibility, and effectiveness of AEDs within Northumberland. The primary aim is to make recommendations that enhance the availability of AEDs, ultimately improving community health and safety. In order to carry this aim out, the group will:

1. Assess the current distribution of AEDs in Northumberland and their proximity to public spaces, businesses, and residential areas.
2. Understand maintenance requirements and costs, ways these can be met, and assurance sought that AEDs are available.
3. Review regulations governing AED installation, maintenance, and use.
4. Understand the integration of AEDs with emergency services and medical response systems to ensure the most up to date information is available.
5. Examine the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns and identify ways these could be build upon.

The Group will be chaired by Councillor Kath Nisbet and will consist of 3 other elected members.

Evidence Gathering

To inform the investigation, the Task and Finish Group will consider a range of sources and evidence. These sources include existing AED deployment data, which will provide insights into the current state of AED accessibility. Additionally, they will review AED maintenance records and protocols to ensure these devices are kept in working order.

In our efforts to enhance public awareness, we will examine public awareness campaigns and materials related to AEDs. This includes surveys or interviews with community members to gauge their awareness and willingness to use AEDs during emergencies.

The regulatory landscape will be thoroughly examined, with a focus on relevant legislation and regulations governing AED installation, maintenance, and use. We will also explore case studies that showcase successful AED integration with emergency services and medical response systems to extract best practices and recommendations for our jurisdiction.

By considering these sources of evidence, the Task and Finish Group aims to develop comprehensive recommendations that will improve the availability and effectiveness of AEDs in our community, ultimately enhancing public safety and well-being. The group will seek to gather evidence from the following sources:

- North East Ambulance Service (NEAS)
- Public Health Specialist

- Town and Parish Councils
- Executive Director of Place and Regeneration
- Other sources deemed necessary.

Proposed Timetable for Review

It is proposed that the review will be completed as follows. The dates will be finalised as participants availability is confirmed:

| Stage | Participants | Committee | Date |
|------------------|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Agreement of ToR | Membership | Virtually | |
| Session 1: | NEAS | Task and Finish Group | |
| Session 2: | Executive Director of Place and Regeneration | Task and Finish Group | |
| Session 3: | Membership | Task and Finish Group | |
| Final Report | Membership | Health and Wellbeing OSC | 5 th March 2024 |

Evidence Gathering Sessions

The number of evidence sessions may change. It is possible that evidence given during these sessions may need further follow up in other sessions or via other means such as written responses. The number of required evidence sessions will not be known until the 1st session has taken place.

Consideration of Findings

The findings will be considered in a written report presented to Health and Wellbeing Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 5th March 2024.

Conclusion

Given the importance to local communities and the health of Northumberland residents, an investigation into the availability, maintenance, accessibility, and effectiveness of AEDs is vital. By conducting an in-depth investigation, the group will formulate appropriate and well-founded recommendations to present to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

To consider and agree the following:

- Consider the terms of reference/scope of the review.
- Agree a timetable for the review to be completed.
- Agree that the findings of the review will be reported to Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers

No Background Papers

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