

## **PE1707/B**

Caithness Defibrillator Campaign Group submission of 11 February 2019

At present there is no legislation covering the registration, proper governance, maintenance, storage requirements etc. for defibrillators which is very worrying as they are Medical Devices

### **Food for thought**

When you buy a car it must be registered before you can drive it away and it must have regular checks to prove road worthiness as a legal requirement. But there is no legal requirement for an owner to register a vital life saving device such as an AED or for any checks to be carried out. These devices may be used on members of the public and members of the public should be confident that they are registered and well maintained as they are a vital link in the chain of survival.

We started an AED Campaign in April this year in association with the Caithness Heart Support Group (CHSG) and the Community Heartbeat Trust (CHT) to find out where all the AEDs were in the Caithness area. We have just completed AED Roadshows in 11 venues around Caithness highlighting the importance of AEDs being registered and the importance of regular checks being carried out etc.

The following is what we found, very worrying.

1. AEDs being placed outside in unsuitable cabinets i.e. no heater to keep medical device at appropriate temperature and full of dead flies and insects.
2. Pads out of date
3. No record keeping of checks
4. AED used twice, batteries not changed and pads out of date
5. AED given to community no one looked at it for 4 years until we started our campaign (now registered)
6. Told of distressing incident where the SAS Call Handler did not direct anyone to the AED in the village because it was out with the SAS 150m radius. This limit is ridiculous considering the geography of Caithness and no one in the village was told of this limit when deciding where to place the AED.
7. Lack of signage directing the public to where an AED is located
8. Disputes over who actually is responsible for an AED placed in a community
9. No real governance

Our research showed that communities are being gifted an AED through various sources with no guidance, help or advice on the governance etc. I have been asked to visit communities to give advice/help on registering etc.

The issues we have highlighted proves that the whole AED situation is a bit of a shambles and someone in authority needs to take control and educate communities on their responsibilities on ownership of an AED and what that entails after all these are vital life saving devices especially for rural communities such as Caithness and should be looked after in a responsible manner.

Only 4 AEDs were registered in Caithness with the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) when we started our campaign we have now persuaded 28 owners to register with another 11 AED owners reluctant to register for whatever reason. Our thoughts are they are not willing to sign up to the SAS Public Access Defibrillator agreement and also the wording on the SAS website is putting owners off registering as it states register your Public Access Defibrillator which many AEDs in our area are not public access as they are within organisations or businesses.

## **Villages and Rural Locations**

Despite every effort and endeavour by ambulance paramedics, some emergency calls can take more than 10 minutes to arrive at an incident. Rural communities and villages are at greater risk when cardiac arrest occurs. Every effort is made to arrive at an incident within Government recommended timescales of 8 minutes. When cardiac arrest occurs every minute without the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) can reduce chance of survival by 10%. When 10 minutes approaches, only effective CPR may prolong the chance of survival of the patient.

When someone calls 999 and the SAS Call Handler ascertains that the emergency is a cardiac arrest the Call Handler will not send someone for an AED if it is out with a 150m radius, this is a ridiculously small radius considering the geography of Caithness. I believe that this is not standard around the whole of the UK.

The public should know where these devices are located and to be assured that they are in good working order.

In 2017 a Bill was presented to Parliament which would have made Defibrillators compulsory in schools, leisure centres, sports centres and major public places, but due to the 2017 election the Defibrillator (Availability) Bill was tabled never became law.

Why are there no controls over defibrillators? You can purchase a defib to use on a human being with no medical knowledge or understanding of the liabilities. Any provision should with a registered supplier with a medical director.

Anyone can become a defibrillator retailer with no medical background or any form of registration. Why? Why are communities not being advised re governance?

It is estimated some 30% of community defibs are out of action at any point in time, due to communities not understanding the need to maintain the equipment, or have bought the wrong equipment to begin with.

Why is training not compulsory? Why are communities not advised re duty of care? Why are communities not told they have to transfer the rescue data to hospital? Or how to? Why are fire extinguishers compulsory in public places yet defibrillators are not? Why are they not compulsory in secondary schools? Why is Basic Life support not taught in schools?

All defibs in the community should be FDA certified, or from 2020, MDR certified. This ensures quality and properly tested, and avoids equipment with dubious background.

No defib should be in the community older than 15 years old. No defib in the community should be a model brought to market prior to 2015, and should be disability certified i.e. avoids equipment dumping of old models.

There needs to be proper controls over defibrillator cabinets. Many being used are not Ingress Protection (IP) rated, or are single skin mains powered metal, therefore can damage the defib. Cabinets should go through medical device registration too to ensure fit for purpose.