

# How to build a Heartsafe community



A toolkit to help more people survive cardiac arrest in your area

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## Introduction

When British Heart Foundation (BHF), Oliver Cookson Foundation, Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) and St John Ambulance started working on the Heartsafe Community Project in Wythenshawe, Manchester, we estimated that the average return journey for local people to reach a defibrillator was 13 minutes and 47 seconds. By the end of the project, the average return journey to reach a defibrillator was reduced to 6 minutes 32 seconds.

We achieved this by:

- Identifying defibrillators that were already in place and registered on The Circuit (you can do this by looking at [defibfinder.uk](https://defibfinder.uk)) and finding gaps where there were none
- Encouraging defibrillator owners to move them to the outside of their buildings and in some cases, to put them into unlocked cabinets to make them truly accessible to everyone

- Putting new defibrillators in locations that had none. We focused particularly on the residential areas, because eight out of ten out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home

We also supported 254 members of the community to learn CPR so that they can recognise a cardiac arrest when it occurs and feel more

confident in delivering CPR while waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

This document explains how we achieved all of this. We wanted this to be an inspiration for other organisations or groups who want to make their community safer. Local businesses, workers and residents of Wythenshawe played a vital role in making it happen – just like you can in your local area.



## Over 30,000

out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in the UK every year

### Summary of quick tips

Without immediate help, someone who has a cardiac arrest will die. At the moment, not enough people get the help they need. Just 8% – less than one in 10 – of people survive a sudden cardiac arrest. With a few straightforward changes, more lives could be saved. Here are some quick tips for things you can do to make your local area Heartsafe:

**1 Make it easier for local people to learn CPR.** Knowing the basics of what to do in an emergency helps save lives. You don't need to be a CPR expert to run the training – there are lots of free resources to help you and many of them are free and online. There's more detail on pages 10 and 16.

**2 Make the most of defibrillators already in the community by making them available 24/7 in unlocked cabinets.** Every second counts in an emergency. Ask local organisations, including schools, with a defibrillator inside their building to move it outside in an unlocked cabinet. It will be available in an emergency and has the potential to save far more lives that way. See pages 4 and 5 for more information.

**3 If you have funding for new defibrillators, consider putting them near to where people live.** Eight out of ten cardiac arrests happen at home, so it's important to have defibrillators in residential areas. Get more information on page 6.

**4 Tell people where the defibrillator is.** Register your defibrillator on The Circuit so that the ambulance service will know where it is in an emergency. It will also show up on [defibfinder.uk](https://defibfinder.uk), so your local community will know about it if they search for it online. See page 6.

Read on to find out more about how you can make a difference in your community. This guide also contains inspiring stories from real people who have achieved lifesaving change in their area.

Many of the people you'll meet in this guide have been working to make Wythenshawe a Heartsafe community. This work was done in 2023-24 with the help of British Heart Foundation, the Oliver Cookson Foundation, Resuscitation Council UK and St John Ambulance.



A defibrillator that is unlocked and publicly accessible is more likely to be used in an emergency

## Helping to save lives with defibrillators

A well-placed defibrillator in a community can help save lives of local people, but it's important to think carefully about how easy it will be to fetch quickly in an emergency.

James Cant, CEO at RCUK, says: "To help increase survival rates we need to make sure defibrillators are as accessible as possible to local communities. We also want to ensure access to a defibrillator isn't a postcode lottery. That's why communities need support so they're placing their defibrillators where need is greatest."

Defibrillators are most likely to be used in an emergency when they are

- publicly accessible 24/7 in an unlocked cabinet
- in places with the highest rates of cardiac arrest, like residential areas
- visible to the public and known to the ambulance services. Defibrillators registered on The

Circuit means the ambulance call handlers can tell the person calling 999 where to find it in an emergency.

Judy O'Sullivan, Director of Innovation in Health Programmes at BHF, says: "The few minutes you spend registering your defibrillator on The Circuit could contribute to saving a life one day. Don't delay, register your defibrillator on The Circuit today."

Unfortunately, defibrillators are often not placed where they're

most likely to be used or they are not stored in a way that makes it easy to fetch them in a hurry. There aren't many in residential areas, even though most cardiac arrests happen at home. Defibrillators can often be placed in clusters such on a high street, with not enough placed near where people live. There also tend to be fewer defibrillators in less affluent areas, even though these areas have higher rates of cardiac arrest.

***"The few minutes you spend registering your defibrillator on The Circuit could contribute to saving a life one day. Don't delay, register your defibrillator on The Circuit today."***

Judy O'Sullivan, Director of Innovation in Health Programmes at BHF



## How a primary school made its defibrillator available for the local community

People don't always realise the importance of having defibrillators outside, or they're not sure how to go about it. But if you explain the difference it can make, they'll hopefully be willing to move it, to help make their community safer.

Your local school could be a great starting point. All English state schools should have at least one defibrillator (it varies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, so it's worth checking). Research from the West Midlands suggests that a cardiac arrest is 100 times more likely to happen in the community within 300 metres of a school than within the school itself. So making a defibrillator available to the community can make a huge difference. The same research found that more than a third of all cardiac arrests happen within 300 metres of a school.

Since most schools are closed overnight, at weekends and

holidays, moving the defibrillator outside the gates will make a big difference to the number of hours when it's available.

If your local school, business or other organisation has a defibrillator but it's not publicly accessible, or it's not accessible 24/7, why not ask them to make it more accessible? That might mean agreeing that they're happy for members of the public to use it in an emergency. Ask them to advertise that it is there. It might mean moving it outside so that it's accessible when the venue is closed. It's a fantastic way for a local business or organisation to contribute to the wider community.

Don't forget to ask them to register their defibrillator on to The Circuit too, or update the Circuit details if they've made it more accessible.

### Achieving change at Baguley Hall Primary

The school in Wythenshawe has taken action to help the community.

Anne-Marie Dorsey is Business Manager at the school. She says: "British Heart Foundation asked us if we could move our defibrillator so that it would be available 24/7. Until then we just didn't think it was possible, although we would have been happy in principle. The difficulty was that there are railings around the school, and no electricity supply to the gates or railings. We didn't have budget to install an electric supply to the gates.

"But British Heart Foundation told us that the defibrillator could be put on a lamppost. We were more than happy for that to happen.

"We are in the middle of a housing estate, so there is every chance that someone in the community might need it. I know antisocial behaviour is always a concern, but we are hopeful nothing will happen to it.

"I would say to other schools, just be open to the idea. Now this one will be available for the community to help keep them safe."



Making a school defibrillator publicly available can benefit the local community

## 7 steps to placing a defibrillator locally

**1 Find out what is already there first.** Go to [defibfinder.uk](https://defibfinder.uk) and enter your postcode or the name of your town or village to see the nearest registered defibrillators. You'll be able to see the days and times they're available and whether the public have access to them. Bear in mind it can only show you defibrillators that have been registered on The Circuit and where the defibrillator guardian has given permission to share the data.

**2 Try to plug a defibrillator gap.** Think carefully about where to put it. Try to choose somewhere there isn't already a defibrillator close by. Bear in mind that most cardiac arrests happen at home. So an area with lots of housing makes sense, especially if it's a less affluent area, as these have the highest rates of cardiac arrest. Ideally a defibrillator should be available within 3-5 minutes on foot. It's also fine to put it somewhere like a high street, but check first to see how many other defibrillators are in this area so that you are not just adding to an already well-stocked area.

**3 Make it easy to access in an emergency.** We strongly encourage you to place your defibrillator in an unlocked cabinet on the outside of a building, in a visible place with no barriers to access so that it can be easily collected in an emergency. Lots of organisations or groups such as places of worship buy a defibrillator for their members and place the defibrillator inside the building. It would be more useful to place it outside the building and in an area where it could be accessed by anyone, day or night.

**4 Install it where it can be easily seen.** Ideally it will be in a temperature-controlled case (the pads don't work as well when it's very cold) and if the case has lighting, that will help someone to spot it in an emergency. A case like this will need an electricity supply and an electrician to install it – see page 8 for help with this. A defibrillator that's outside so it's always accessible will have a far better chance of being used.

**6 Put a sign up.** This can really encourage people to use the defibrillator in an emergency and reduce the fear around it as well as making it clear what the defibrillator is. You can order or download a sign and accompanying poster from the BHF website.

***“My advice to others is, ‘Don't dither around, get on with it – the sooner the better.’ Since moving it outside we've got a defibrillator that's available to the community and could save someone's life. Why would you hesitate to do that?”***

Eddie Flanagan, Wythenshawe Forum Trust

**5 Label it:** Write contact details, including a telephone number, on the back of the defibrillator, on a sticker or in permanent marker. This will help the ambulance or hospital staff, or rescuer, return it to you if it gets taken away in an emergency.

**7 Register your new defibrillator on The Circuit.** It only takes a few minutes, and it will then be visible to the ambulance services making it much more likely to save a life. Go to [thecircuit.uk](https://thecircuit.uk) and click on 'Register your defibrillator'.

### **Josh's experience of becoming a defibrillator guardian for the first time**

As part of the Heartsafe project in Wythenshawe, three new defibrillators were provided to fill in gaps. One of them is outside the Tree of Life Centre, which offers health and wellbeing programmes, low-cost furniture and other services. Josh Britton, wellbeing and progression coordinator, says they were happy to host the defibrillator. “We are a bit of a hub for the community. We have over 300 people a day here, so to have that extra reassurance from a defibrillator is good. I think it's a great idea not just for people in the centre, but the whole community. We understand the importance of having it outside and accessible 24/7. If it could help even one person then it's worth it.” He says that becoming a defibrillator guardian is simple and something the centre was happy to do. “We are very happy to look after it, it's not complicated.”



## Buying a new defibrillator

We know that buying a defibrillator might feel like a big investment, but there's help available:

- British Heart Foundation offers defibrillator funding to communities that needs it most. Check the BHF website to see when the funding programme is next due to open and whether your group is eligible to apply.
- You can buy a defibrillator from British Heart Foundation – visit [defibrillators.bhf.org.uk](https://defibrillators.bhf.org.uk) or St John Ambulance – visit [www.sja.org.uk/defib](https://www.sja.org.uk/defib). Many other charities across the UK sell defibrillators and provide guidance on how to store them.
- You can do your own fundraising. Sponsored walks and other events, ticketed events, bake sales, a birthday or anniversary party where you ask for donations instead of gifts – there are lots of ways to raise money. Check out [bhf.org.uk/fundraise](https://bhf.org.uk/fundraise) for ideas.
- It's also worth contacting your local council to ask if they can help.
- Some local businesses might be interested in sponsoring a defibrillator.



A defibrillator that is outside, in an unlocked cabinet, has the greatest chance of being used in an emergency

***“During the ultimate medical emergency, it’s important that people can quickly find a defibrillator and use one. Defibrillators help save lives and anyone can use one. They tell you exactly what to do, no training is needed. If someone is having a cardiac arrest, it simply needs to be switched on and it will talk the person through each step – it’s like having an expert in the room.”***

James Cant, CEO at RCUK



## How to get help with installing a defibrillator

If you know any local electrical companies, they might be willing to do the work for free, to help the community. Another option, especially if you're dealing with more than one defibrillator, is to see if your local council can help. All public authorities in England and Scotland, and most in Wales, must consider social value in their work. In practice this means that their suppliers may have agreed to donate a certain number of hours to projects that will help the local area – which might mean they can help with installing (or moving) defibrillators. Some other organisations like housing associations also work in this way.

This is what happened in Wythenshawe. Emily Harrison, from the Oliver Cookson Foundation, said: “Manchester City Council sent a note out to their contractors, saying we needed electrical suppliers to assess defibrillator installations. The response was great. We had three or four different companies reach out and say, yes, we can send down an electrician who would volunteer their time to complete the installation.

“Even if they don't have specific social value in place, it's still worth asking local businesses to help. It's good for them to be able to say, 'We've helped install 10 defi-

brillators across our local community.' And all it's really costing them is the time to do it.”

Wythenshawe Community Housing Group also played a part in helping to get defibrillators installed. James Hunter, Head of Procurement, says: “The council contacted us to ask if we were able to support this through our suppliers. So we contacted our electrical supplier. It was a very easy conversation – they were very keen to support. They went to do the assessments and to do the installations.

“It has been a very positive project and hopefully a positive outcome for the community.”



Local electrical companies may be willing to help with defibrillator installation



## How to approach your council for help

**1** If you have any contacts at the council (councillors or council officers), contact them first. Even if they are not the right person to help, ask if they can point you to the right person. If they have someone who leads on social value, try them first, or your local neighbourhood team.

**2** Not sure who your local councillor is? Your council website will have this information, along with contact details. Your ward (small area within the council) might have more than one councillor. If that's the case, there's nothing wrong with contacting them all.

**3** You could search online to see if you can find an email for the council's procurement team, or the Head of Procurement. They will be well placed to ask the council's suppliers if they can help.

### Worried whether your defibrillator will be safe outside?

People are sometimes reluctant to put defibrillators outside because they worry about what might happen to them. But there have been very few cases of stolen or vandalised defibrillators reported to The Circuit since 2019 and often when a defibrillator looks like it has been stolen it has actually been used. If you're worried, it's a good idea to ask your local police force for advice about the risks and any security measures that will minimise the risks without making the defibrillator inaccessible.

The consensus statement from Resuscitation Council UK says: "The priority is to apply an automated defibrillator to the person in cardiac

arrest with the absolute minimum of delay. Unlocked cabinets allow immediate access to a defibrillator in a situation where seconds count."

James Cant, CEO at RCUK, says: "Lockable cabinets can delay accessing a defibrillator. Every second counts when it comes to cardiac arrest so public access defibrillators should be placed in unlocked cabinets that allow immediate access in an emergency."

Emily Harrison, from the Oliver Cookson Foundation, says: "It's natural to worry about vandalism or theft, but it's not as big an issue as people might think. In

our experience defibrillators don't have a street value – people don't buy stolen ones. And education and training for local residents and organisations will help to make sure that people in the community know how important that equipment is."

Eddie Flanagan (pictured), chief executive of Wythenshawe Forum Trust, says there have not been any issues with the Forum defibrillator, which is kept outside at night. "From my experience, that kind of equipment does not tend to get stolen. The advantages outweigh the risks. There are three now in the main civic centre here and they haven't been touched or damaged, as far as I know."

***"You don't want to have it locked because that wastes time and every minute reduces someone's risk of survival."***

Sarah Pruet, Wythenshawe Forum Trust

### How the Wythenshawe Forum made its defibrillator more accessible

The Forum is one of the busiest public buildings in Wythenshawe, with a leisure centre, library, event space, doctors' surgery and shops, and it already had a defibrillator at the leisure centre. But it wasn't accessible after closing time. A chat with the Forum staff, British Heart Foundation and Oliver Cookson Foundation helped to change that.

Eddie Flanagan, Chief Executive of Wythenshawe Forum Trust,

says: "I know how important it is. I've had past experiences having to deal with someone who needed resuscitation, and there wasn't always a defibrillator available. So when we were asked if we could put our defibrillator outside, we didn't hesitate. I feel it has put the Forum and its local community in a better place."

Sarah Pruet is Business Support Officer at Wythenshawe Forum Trust. She says: "We

realised that by putting it outside we could make a difference. The leisure centre agreed to change their procedures for duty managers, so that when they do lockup it is put outside.

"We know that there is some risk it could get taken or damaged, but the potential benefits far outweigh the negatives. You don't want to have it locked, because that wastes time and every minute reduces someone's chance of survival."

## Making it easier for people to learn CPR

CPR training is vital because it helps people to recognise a cardiac arrest, and then to know what to do

### Top tips for making CPR training easier

#### 1 Never run CPR training before?

There are organisations that can help, such as St John Ambulance, local charities like Oliver Cookson Foundation, or your local ambulance service. You can also learn to be an instructor yourself. See page 17 to find lots of resources to help you, including free online training from British Heart Foundation and from Resuscitation Council UK. With British Heart Foundation's RevivR app, people can learn CPR in just 15 minutes – you don't even need a mannequin to practise on.

2 Consider offering CPR training at a session run by another community group, or at an event – anything from a local fair to a sports match. Ask the event organisers if they'd be happy for you to “piggyback” on their event – some people call

this “ambush” training. They might even help you to publicise it. That way you'll have a ready-made audience for your CPR training.

3 Try to target groups who tend to have a higher risk of cardiac arrest and lower chance of survival – like people in less affluent areas, or from ethnic minority groups, or who are older. You can find out which parts of your area are most in need at [tinyurl.com/index-MD](http://tinyurl.com/index-MD).

4 Publicise your training as much as possible. Local groups on social media are useful, and so are simple flyers and posters. Ask the training venue if they can help with publicity.

5 Think about what you'll need, so you can check whether your venue has it or if you need to take it along. For example, if you're

planning to show online training or video on a big screen at a venue, does the venue have a screen? Will you need a cable to connect a laptop to the screen? Doing a practice run-through beforehand will help you feel more confident.

6 Local stories and statistics can make the issue seem real. If you know any cardiac arrest survivors, or can speak to any, would they speak at your event? Isabelle Kidder, Survival Programme Delivery Manager for British Heart Foundation, runs CPR training in her local area in Sheffield. She says: “I always try to make the skill sound like something they might need, something that can happen to them and their families. I tell them that 80% of cardiac arrests happen in the home – because

With BHF's free RevivR app, it's easy to learn CPR with just a smartphone or tablet and a cushion. Other organisations can help you run CPR training, or you can do it yourself (see page 17)





that helps people to realise that it could happen to them.” You can also tell them that someone who gives CPR and uses a defibrillator before the emergency services arrive could more than double a person’s chance of surviving a cardiac arrest. You can find cardiac arrest statistics for England, and for your local ambulance service (in England), at [tinyurl.com/OHCAstats](https://tinyurl.com/OHCAstats).

**7** Everyone loves a reward – it could be a certificate, a badge, recognition on social media, or a chance to win a bigger reward, like a “I know how to save a life” mug or t-shirt. You could ask a local business if they’d sponsor small prizes like this.

***“It’s always better to do something than nothing”***

Emily Harrison

Dr Lynn Thomas, Medical Director of St John Ambulance, says: “Around 1,000 more lives could be saved in England every year if more of us felt first aid confident. That’s why St John Ambulance has teamed up with NHS England to create the CPR Community Network. Its free, online CPR and defibrillator resources are available in several languages including Urdu and British Sign Language can be accessed by anyone, anytime so they can be the difference between a life lost and a life saved. See page 17 for details.

“Our highly skilled volunteers deliver first aid awareness sessions at the heart of communities and demonstrate how to give CPR and use a defibrillator, giving people confidence to help in the moments that matter.”

Try to offer CPR training to groups who have a higher chance of cardiac arrest, including people from ethnic minority groups or less affluent areas



## 5 CPR myths, and how to bust them

There are some common concerns and fears that can get in the way of people giving CPR. If you can address these in your training sessions, you can help people to act when an emergency happens.

### ***“I don’t know how to use a defib”***

You don’t need any training to use a defibrillator, but most people don’t realise that. The device won’t give a shock unless the person needs one, so you can’t shock anyone by mistake or hurt the person.

### ***“I don’t want to give mouth-to-mouth”***

RCUK guidelines for CPR include giving rescue breaths if you can. But if you can’t or don’t want to, you can do continuous chest compressions until medical professionals arrive – it is far better than doing nothing.

***“I’d say, don’t see CPR training as a big scary thing: it’s part of life, isn’t it?”***

Shannon Fitzgerald

### ***“I don’t want to hurt the person”***

They’ll die if they don’t get help fast. In an emergency, CPR can only help. So don’t worry about damaging their ribs, it’s far better than the alternative. Occasionally, people worry they might get sued for trying to help – but they are protected by a law (the Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Act 2015) which was passed specifically to protect people in situations like this.

Dr Lynn Thomas, Medical Director of St John Ambulance, says: “It makes such a difference to an ambulance crew when they arrive at the scene of a cardiac arrest and they see someone doing CPR. They know that the person has a better chance of surviving thanks to someone stepping in to help.”

### ***“Doing CPR training will be hard, or scary”***

Shannon Fitzgerald, from Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, who made one of the group’s “community connector” events available for CPR training, says she would recommend it to anyone. “The people delivering the training were fun and engaging and relaxed. Even though it’s a really important subject, it was quite light-hearted and useful, and everybody had positive things to say about it.”

### ***“I’m worried about doing it wrong”***

Emily Harrison, from the Oliver Cookson Foundation, says: “Doing CPR is really simple. I think that the barrier to people giving CPR is confidence rather than actually being able to do it. It’s always better to do something than nothing.”

If you want to feel more ready, British Heart Foundation’s RevivR teaches you to save a life in just 15 minutes – [revivr.bhf.org.uk](http://revivr.bhf.org.uk).





Sue Cooley has personal experience of how CPR saves lives

### Tips from a cardiac arrest survivor

Sue Cooley, 72, from Wythenshawe, who survived a cardiac arrest thanks to CPR, says:

"I think the challenging thing is getting people to understand the importance of it. You've got to frighten people a bit. You could have a perfectly healthy lifestyle and have a cardiac arrest.

"If you're organising CPR training, I would say start small initially. Start in your little bit of the community. If you are running any training, spread the word. Invite other groups along. That way more people will get the opportunity. Make it easy for people to come. Make sure people know how to get there. Let them know that they will get a certificate – people like getting something to take away with them.

"Don't forget to explain what a defibrillator is, and how to use it. Lots of people say, 'we're frightened to use it. What if I accidentally shock somebody?' That can't happen, and it's really easy to use – that needs to be explained."

*"You can't change the world. Start in your little bit of the community."*

### 3 things to include in an email invitation to CPR training

Inviting people to CPR training? Here's a handy 3-step template.

- 1 Key details – what the training is, the date, time, and how long it will last for.** Plus the venue and address, or a Zoom or Teams link if it's online. You might want to say whether it's a one-off event or part of a series.
- 2 A few extra details to motivate people to come can make all the difference.** You could include quotes or testimonials from people who've done the training, about how good it was. Some relevant figures, like the fact that four out of five cardiac arrests happen in the home, can also really help people to understand why this matters.
- 3 How to book a place.** It's always handy to know who's coming (you might want to give them a deadline for letting you know). You can ask them to email you to book a place, or, maybe easier, use a booking platform like Eventbrite. This can help people put your event straight into their online diary and can even send reminders for you, to save you time. Otherwise, don't forget to send a reminder on the day.

## Working with others

Working with other people is one of the best ways to build a Heartsafe community. Talking about your work publicly can encourage others to join you, as well as raising awareness.

### Top tips for working with others to achieve change

**1** Don't try to do it alone. It might feel like a lot of work if it's just you. Four to six people is often a good number for your core group – you can support each other, and then try to involve lots of people from there.

**2** Ask people you already know. They might know other people who might be able to help, and hopefully they can introduce you. Emily

Harrison, from the Oliver Cookson Foundation, says: “My number one piece of advice for other people is: find local networks and build relationships with them. Most cities or counties will have a directory of community and voluntary sector organisations. They are the ones who are going to be able to support you to deliver these projects. And CPR training can be added to an existing activity,

making it easier to get people to come along.”

**3** Keep it personal. In general, face-to-face meetings work better than phone calls, and phone calls work better than email. If you are sending an email, a targeted, personalised email to the right person is better than a general email address. Shannon Fitzgerald, from Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, says: “People are more likely to come to your event if they know you. So it's all about building relationships and having conversations with people. It's helpful too if you can do things in different locations, it opens it up to new people to come in.”

***“We'd urge members of the public to reach out to their local St John Network to learn more about our first aid services nearby so they can empower community response, improve local health outcomes and help save lives.”***

Dr Lynn Thomas, Medical Director of St John Ambulance

Working with other people in your local community can achieve a lot more than doing it on your own

**4** Use Facebook groups - for your area and for local community groups to connect with others and find out what's happening in your area. Don't be afraid to use them to ask questions.

**5** Ask someone with real-life experience to help you spread the word – like someone who has had a cardiac arrest or who has given CPR.

***“My number one piece of advice for other people is, find local networks and build relationships with them”***

Emily Harrison



# 7 types of people who can help with Heartsafe communities



## Councillors and council officers

For putting you in touch with the right people, like electricians to install defibrillators. If you need to access an electricity supply from a lamp-post, the council will probably need to give permission, so ask them for advice.



## Local media (radio, television, newspapers, local websites)

For publicity for CPR sessions, an appeal for volunteers, or media coverage to celebrate the successes you've had so far and thank people. See more tips on this on page 16.



## Cardiac arrest survivors, or family members who have lost someone

To share their stories to help people understand why CPR matters, either at an event or training session, or quotes that you can use in emails and press releases.



## Local celebrities

They could share your social media posts with their followers, or come along to a CPR training session, or give you supportive quotes to include in a press release. Don't forget to let your local media know about any celebrity support you get (with the celebrity's permission, of course).



## Community groups and sports clubs

For help with fundraising, or if you need a venue for CPR training, or to tell their members about the work you're doing. Or perhaps they have a defibrillator that isn't accessible 24/7. Don't forget Rotary and Lions clubs, youth groups, working men's clubs, political clubs, community centres, neighbourhood groups, religious groups, your local St John Ambulance Network, and Friends of the local park.



## Local businesses

For defibrillator sponsorship, or making their defibrillator publicly accessible, or any relevant services they offer (like installing defibrillators, or printing CPR posters or flyers for you).



## Schools, colleges and universities

To make their defibrillator publicly accessible (outside the school gates), and to register it on The Circuit. Maybe they could be a venue for CPR training in the evening? Do they have any big events where you could spread the word about CPR? Are their staff trained in CPR? If it's a university, do they have any student societies that could help with the work you're doing?

## Using the media (and social media)

Emily Harrison, from the Oliver Cookson Foundation, says: “I never underestimate the power of local newspapers and newsletters and radio. So find your local newspaper and radio station. They’ve all got a Facebook page, and an X (what was Twitter) account. If you can get them involved in a campaign, that’s amazing. But if you’re just giving them a bit of content that they can include, that’s still wonderful. It’s a great way to connect with local sponsors and partners as well.”

You can write a press release, but if that sounds a bit daunting, going in to see them for a chat can work just as well. Try to tailor it to the local area, with local facts and figures, and if you can, a supportive quote from a local person who’s survived a cardiac arrest.

Most local media love a good news story, so if you know anyone who’s saved a life by giving CPR, ask them if you can publicise that. It’s a lovely way to recognise them for their amazing efforts, while also helping to encourage others to do something similar.

Patrick Pringle, Senior Media Manager at British Heart Foundation, says: “Local newspapers and broadcasters can play an invaluable role in raising awareness of the importance of learning CPR and having defibrillators in your community. On top of this, showcasing your efforts in the local media can also encourage others to think about what difference they can make, whether that is learning CPR or registering a defibrillator on The Circuit. CPR and defibrillators are always of interest to local media, so it is worth considering building relationships with journalists, and making sure they know about your vital work.”

### Social media

Dr Lynn Thomas, Medical Director of St John Ambulance, says: ‘By sharing lifesaving campaigns on social media, or engaging with organisations and signposting people to vital messages, you could help your community appoint and register a guardian to a defibrillator, fundraise vital money to help maintain your

local device or help someone feel confident to step in and use their knowledge to save a life. Small actions online can have a large impact, so please don’t underestimate the role of social media in helping to share important messages to both your local media and your community.”

When it comes to social media, don’t worry if you don’t have hundreds or even thousands of followers. Mentioning other relevant groups in your social media posts can help spread your message.

Shannon Fitzgerald, from Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, says: “Whenever I get a lot of reshares and likes and engagement on my social media posts, it’s because I’m tagging other relevant groups. So I’ll tag the venue where we’re having the event, and any community partners who are due to speak at the event or that I know are attending. The more collaboration you can get into your post in terms of tagging other people and hashtagging, the better.”

### Top tips for getting the word out

- 1** Your great work will have much more impact in the long term if you keep it alive – by promoting what you’re doing, and by offering repeat training sessions. This all helps to keep the issue fresh in people’s minds.
- 2** Ask people who are well-known and have platforms of their own to spread the word for you. MPs and councillors are particularly good – they might have their own newspaper column or a slot on local radio.
- 3** Look for community events coming up where you could have a stall or other presence to let everyone know about what you’re doing. It could be something big like an annual fair, or small, like the weekly market.
- 4** Don’t worry if you don’t have a big presence on social media or haven’t used it much. Try to work with others who have, whether it’s asking them to post about your project or to reshare your post.
- 5** Traditional methods like posters and flyers can work well, too. If you’re holding an event, ask the venue to help with publicity.



## Helpful resources

### Support with CPR training

Free CPR resources from British Heart Foundation, including a full guide on how to teach CPR, and posters to advertise CPR sessions. You can also print or order certificates for people who attend your training.

[www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/cpr-training-resources](http://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/cpr-training-resources)

RevivR app, from British Heart Foundation - learn CPR in 15 minutes, either on your own or with a group. You just need a phone or tablet and a cushion.

[revivr.bhf.org.uk](http://revivr.bhf.org.uk)

Cookson First Aid offers first aid training for businesses and schools as well as free first aid courses. Visit

[cooksonfirstaid.org/our-courses](http://cooksonfirstaid.org/our-courses)

Lifesaver is a free online interactive CPR training from Resuscitation Council UK

[www.resus.org.uk/public-resource/how-we-save-lives/lifesaver-learning](http://www.resus.org.uk/public-resource/how-we-save-lives/lifesaver-learning)

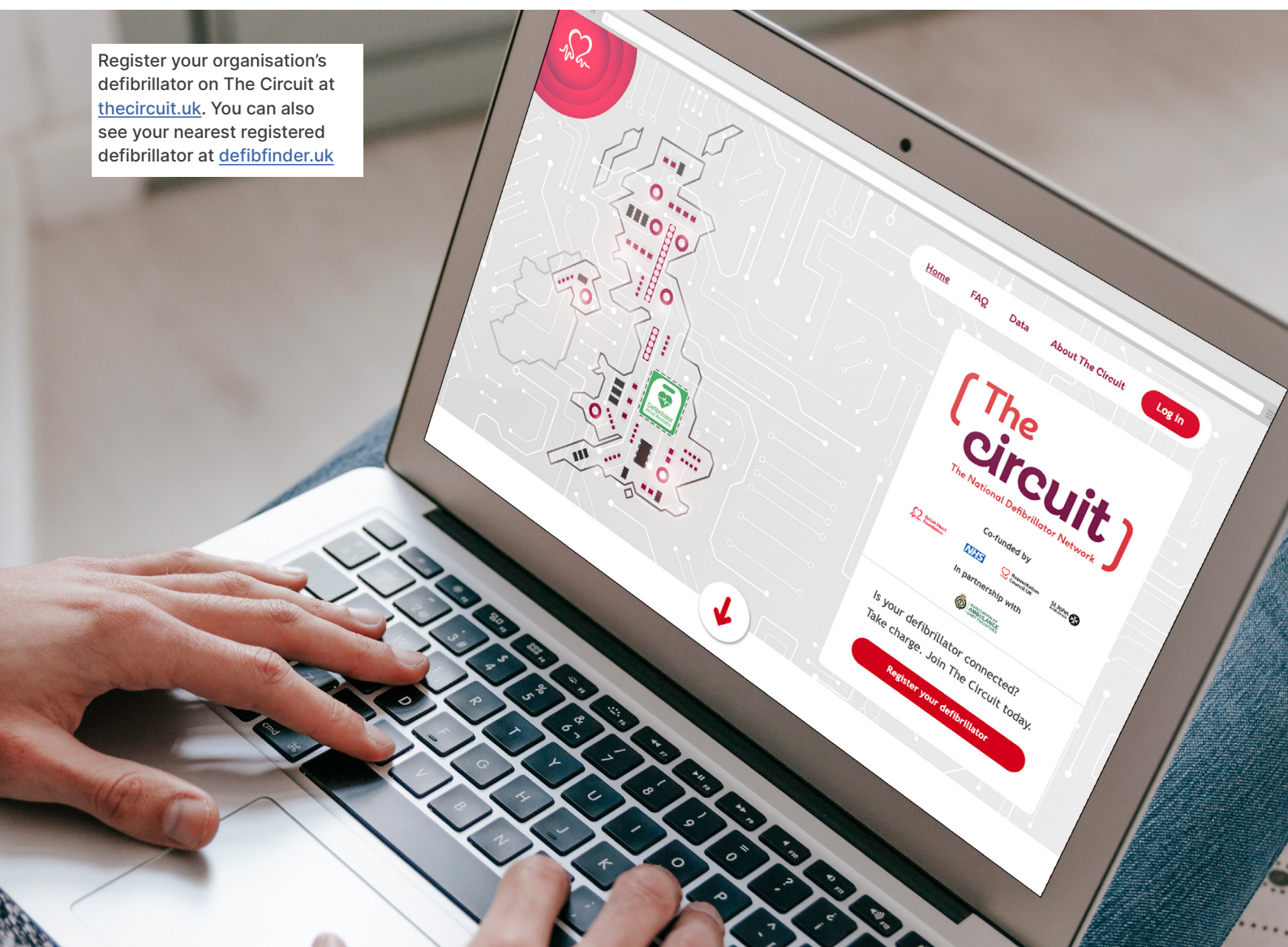
First aid training sessions (in person) from St John Ambulance [www.sja.org.uk/courses](http://www.sja.org.uk/courses) or from British Red Cross

[www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/book-a-first-aid-course](http://www.redcross.org.uk/first-aid/book-a-first-aid-course)

The CPR Network, from St John Ambulance, with lots of CPR and defibrillator resources, including in other languages

[www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/cpr-community-network](http://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/cpr-community-network)

Register your organisation's defibrillator on The Circuit at [thecircuit.uk](http://thecircuit.uk). You can also see your nearest registered defibrillator at [defibfinder.uk](http://defibfinder.uk)



## Defibrillators – useful information

Getting a defibrillator – what you need to know – from British Heart Foundation

[www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/defibrillators/getting-a-defibrillator-what-you-need-to-know](http://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/defibrillators/getting-a-defibrillator-what-you-need-to-know)

Defibrillator guide for first time buyers – from St John Ambulance

[www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/i-need-to-know/defibrillator-guide-for-first-time-buyers](http://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/i-need-to-know/defibrillator-guide-for-first-time-buyers)

Defibrillator guidance for schools from the Department for Education

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/automated-external-defibrillators-aeds-in-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/automated-external-defibrillators-aeds-in-schools)

The Circuit, to register your defibrillator on the national defibrillator network

[www.thecircuit.uk](http://www.thecircuit.uk)

A defibrillator sign that you can download and print, or order copies to buy

[www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/defibrillators/defibrillator-sign-and-poster](http://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/defibrillators/defibrillator-sign-and-poster)

Information on defibrillators – from Resuscitation Council UK

[resus.org.uk/public-resource/defibrillation/defib-dani](http://resus.org.uk/public-resource/defibrillation/defib-dani)

[resus.org.uk/library/additional-guidance/guidance-defibrillators](http://resus.org.uk/library/additional-guidance/guidance-defibrillators)

[resus.org.uk/public-resource/defibrillation](http://resus.org.uk/public-resource/defibrillation)



### Key moments in the year

You can use relevant dates to help get publicity for the work you're doing. You could organise an event or some social media activity to tie in with the date.

**Heart Month – February.** February is also “Defibruary” St John Ambulance Cymru’s annual defibrillator awareness campaign

**Valentines Day – 14 February**

**Restart a Heart Day – 16 October**

**World Heart Day – 29 September**

## Terms used in this guide and what they mean

**Automated External Defibrillator (AED)** – also referred to as a defibrillator. These are devices that are placed externally on the body to deliver an electric shock to restart the heart in the event of cardiac arrest.

**Cardiac arrest** – a medical emergency in which the heart stops pumping blood around the body. It’s not the same as a heart attack (a sudden interruption to the blood supply to part of the heart muscle), although a heart attack is the most common cause. Someone who is having a cardiac

arrest will lose consciousness and will stop breathing normally. The person will die without CPR and/ or use of a defibrillator to restore their heart rhythm.

**CPR** – cardiopulmonary resuscitation, used to treat a cardiac arrest - this is when someone gives chest compressions (with or without rescue breaths) to keep the person alive until their heart restarts beating normally.

**Defibrillator** – a device that gives a high energy shock to the

heart of someone who is in cardiac arrest. At the moment, a public access defibrillator is used in fewer than one in ten cases. Different studies have shown that a public access defibrillator can double, triple or even quadruple the chances of survival in some cases.

**Heartsafe communities** – the name the BHF and its partners have given to work to increase access to defibrillators and provision of CPR in order to increase survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

## Thank you

British Heart Foundation, Oliver Cookson Foundation, Resuscitation Council UK and St John Ambulance would like to thank everyone who supported the project in Wythenshawe. Our thanks go to Manchester City Council, Amey and AB Electrical for their support with defibrillator installations. We would also like to thank Baguley Hall Primary School, Spar Baguley and Tree of Life Centre.

We hope this guide will inspire others to apply the learnings in their own local area. If you're doing something to make the difference between life and death in your community, thank you.

Sue Cooley, from Wythenshawe, who survived a cardiac arrest, says: "I'm passionate about helping other people get involved in Heartsafe communities, so that more people can survive like I did. Cardiac arrest can happen to anybody, anytime.

"Without CPR I wouldn't be here. My grandchildren wouldn't have a grandmother. So think about the people in your life you might be able to help if they had a cardiac arrest. And a big thank you to everyone who is helping to make the difference between life and death in their local community."



### British Heart Foundation

[bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)  
[heretohelp@bhf.org.uk](mailto:heretohelp@bhf.org.uk)



### Oliver Cookson Foundation

[cooksonfirstaid.org](http://cooksonfirstaid.org)  
[hello@cooksonfirstaid.org](mailto:hello@cooksonfirstaid.org)



### Resuscitation Council UK

[resus.org.uk](http://resus.org.uk)  
[communications@resus.org.uk](mailto:communications@resus.org.uk)



### St John Ambulance

[sja.org.uk](http://sja.org.uk)  
[supplies@sja.org.uk](mailto:supplies@sja.org.uk)