

April 2026

Dear Community Services Scrutiny Committee,

RE: The feasibility of having publicly accessible defibrillators in all RCT schools.

I would like to thank Members of the Working Group for their consideration and preparation of the scrutiny report, as requested by Full Council under the agreed [Notice of Motion](#) on 27th November 2024. The constructive way in which the Working Group engaged with council officers and partner organisations, as referenced throughout the scrutiny process is greatly appreciated.

The insights and feedback provided within the report have been incredibly valuable in shaping the Council's ongoing work in this area. The report highlights clear opportunities for development and reinforces the vital role that scrutiny continues to play in shaping Council activity.

As you will note, following careful consideration during our meeting on [December 15th](#), 2025, Cabinet agreed to support the detailed recommendations put forward by the Committee.

By way of context, 62 schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf currently have onsite defibrillators, with 26 of these being publicly accessible, providing the framework within which the agreed recommendations will be progressed.

Discussions have taken place with officers and relevant partners regarding the consideration of each recommendation, including timelines, next steps and future delivery arrangements. Detailed responses in respect of each recommendation can be found below.

WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That every Educational setting in RCT be equipped with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Where appropriate and within reasonable cost, these units should be positioned on the perimeter settings to allow 24/7 access, subject to safeguarding and insurance considerations.

The Education and Inclusion Directorate are actively working towards successfully delivering on this recommendation. The 21st Century Schools Team are currently working with Corporate Resources to deliver a coordinated scoping and surveying exercise that will be undertaken over the next couple of months. This exercise will identify suitable locations for the AED installations on our school sites, as well as providing cost estimates for each site. The schools that do not have an onsite AED will be prioritised in the first phase of the exercise, with those that do not currently have an accessible AED surveyed in the second phase.

To confirm, our aim is to ensure that all school sites have an AED installed within the next 12 months, and where possible these will be publicly accessible.

2. Where current AEDs are located within school premises and are not accessible to the community, the Council should work with WAST and community partners to enable them to place and maintain an AED in a central community location, taking into consideration the Padmap Data and in conjunction with the recommended 500 metre outreach.

The Council's Early Help and Community Programmes Team will work with WAST and initiate a structured feasibility assessment to identify appropriate, central community locations for AED placement within a 500-meter radius of each school where an in-building/on school site device cannot be accessed by the community.

In doing so, officers will work with WAST to review existing AED provisions using PADMAP data to identify any gaps, ensuring the new installations maximise accessibility across communities, working with local organisation to encourage and enable opportunities for hosting and maintaining new devices, ensuring sustainable, ongoing costs (through any available community grants identified) and maintenance arrangements.

3. That the Council lobby Welsh Government to ensure funding for AEDs is built into all future school construction and refurbishment programmes, making AED provision standard feature on new education facilities.

The 21st Century Schools Team, in partnership with Corporate Resources, are in the process of updating RCT's standard brief for all new school builds and refurbishment schemes, to include the requirement for the installation of an AED. Also, where new construction projects are already in the design phase, this addition has been communicated and accepted by the relevant design and delivery teams.

At the appropriate stage of implementation, the Council will formally update the Welsh Government on the approach taken, progress, and impact of the defibrillator rollout, with a view to encourage the consideration of incorporating AED provision as a standard feature in future school construction and refurbishment projects.

4. That the Council promote and collaborate with relevant organisations and charities to embed CPR and defibrillator awareness training across all educational and community settings within the County Borough, including integration into the curriculum where possible, with particular reference to the annual 'restart a Heart' event. Further to this recommendation, that defibrillator awareness training is added annually to the Elected Members Development Programme for all Elected Members to engage in.

The Early Help & Community Programmes Team will take forward a coordinated, partnership-led approach that strengthens community resilience, increases public confidence and ensures consistent messaging. The Team will collaborate with organisations already delivering high-quality lifesaving training to establish a working group to coordinate training opportunities, resources and messaging to ensure lifesaving skills are accessible to all residents and communities.

The working group will promote defibrillator awareness training with existing networks, such as Community Support Steering Group and Neighbourhood Networks.

Education's Community Focused Schools Officer will be a part of the working group to ensure that there is cohesion and collaboration to incorporate the education perspective as requested in the recommendation. Schools form an integral part of our communities so a cross-directorate approach to this will be key to its wide-reaching success.

As part of the 2025 – 2026 Member Development Programme, training has been scoped to deliver on the training recommended. 4 training sessions have been arranged which looks to provide Members with training in relation to use of a defibrillator, basic life support, CPR and choking. It is intended that such training will become a standard item on each municipal year's development programme due to its importance.

5. That Cabinet recognise the benefits of Schools entering into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with a qualified third-party provider to act as guardians of all school-based defibrillators, ensuring consistency in inspection, maintenance, and data management and looks to recommend this action to all Governing Bodies without such agreements already in place.

Discussions between Education and Corporate Resources are ongoing in relation to the establishment of a Council-wide Service Level Agreement, rather than delivering this service on an individual school basis. The preference is to procure and enter into an overarching SLA that will deliver consistency across all school sites, providing the Local Authority with certainty that all AEDs on school sites in Rhondda Cynon Taf are managed effectively by a qualified third-party provider, as well as being registered on the Circuit.

Work to secure this service is currently ongoing with the required tender documentation being developed and drafted. Council officers hope to be in a position to competitively tender for a competent and qualified service provider to deliver this service shortly.

6. That all AEDs within RCTCBC and LA school premises are registered on the Circuit (the national database), and to advocate community groups to register their AED on the database too, with an accompanying public awareness and social media campaign to promote local understanding of defibrillator locations and use.

Corporate Resources are working with Colleagues and other stakeholders to identify the provision of, and requirements for, the defibrillators within Local Authority owned premises, entering into SLA's where necessary for the provision and maintenance of the same.

At the appropriate stage of implementation, the Council's Communications Team will deliver a targeted communications campaign to raise awareness of the availability of AED's within local communities and signpost residents to the British Heart Foundation's DefibFinder website, which provides up-to-date information on the location of all AEDs registered on The Circuit.

7. That planning guidance for all large housing developments across the County Borough encourage developers to include a defibrillator as part of community infrastructure, located in accessible public areas.

The Council recognise that the development of larger housing sites across the County Borough requires the associated provision of new and/or improved local infrastructure, including facilities and services which are needed to mitigate the impact of development at the site or neighbourhood level. These provisions will, in most cases, be secured through planning obligations (through legal Section 106 planning obligations) or a planning condition. Where appropriate, infrastructure (including community facilities, open space, indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and green infrastructure) will be sought on-site.

It is considered that the provision of defibrillators could be potentially secured through either a planning condition or a Section 106, approved as part of the granting of planning permission.

Policies AW4 (Community Infrastructure & Planning Obligations) and AW5 (New Development) within the current Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan make no specific reference to the provision of defibrillators, although Policy AW4 does reference the fact that contributions may be sought in respect of 'community facilities' and 'any other contribution the Council considers appropriate to the development'.

It is expected that the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP), which is currently in the process of preparation, will contain policy which focuses to a greater extent on the wider health agenda, within our communities which reflects the greater focus on this area since the preparation of the current LDP. With a greater emphasis on health outcomes as part of our decision making it is considered that there should then be a sufficient policy hook to request such provision as part of the negotiation of any planning obligation, particularly given their relatively modest cost and acknowledged wider public benefit.

As such, officers will need to give further consideration as to the most appropriate route to secure such provision and this may vary depending on the site and the applicant. For example, it could be considered particularly onerous to agree a s106 agreement solely for this one issue where a suitably worded planning condition may be more appropriate.

Consideration would also need to be given as to the future ongoing management and responsibility of any public defibrillators provided.

From a reasonableness perspective, it is suggested that requests are sought in respect of large residential developments, as appropriate.

However, it should be stressed that the Council, in its function as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) could not mandate such provision and nor would failure to provide a defibrillator justify a reason for refusal of planning permission.

8. That Legal and Insurance services produce a consistent borough wide framework addressing liability, vandalism, and access arrangements to provide assurance to schools acting as guardians of public defibrillators.

Legal and Insurance Services already provide advice and support to schools on liability and risk management matters. Accordingly, officers will be asked to review existing guidance and arrangements, in consultation with Education Services and relevant stakeholders, with a view to developing a proportionate and consistent framework that provides clarity and reassurance to schools while supporting the wider objective of improving public access to life-saving equipment. Any proposed framework will seek to balance safeguarding responsibilities, insurance considerations and practical access requirements, and will be aligned with existing health and safety, risk management and insurance arrangements already in place across the Council.

9. The Council works with WAST to understand and assess the adequacy of AED provision in Council, community and school settings utilising WAST database information and strengthen partnership working with local charities, community groups, and emergency services to identify coverage gaps and opportunities for co-funding.

The Council recognises that ensuring adequate, equitable AED coverage across the Borough is essential for improving cardiac arrest outcomes. To achieve this, the Council will work closely with WAST to undertake a comprehensive assessment of current AED provision across Council premises, schools, and community settings. This review will utilise WAST's most up-to-date database and mapping systems to produce an accurate baseline of publicly accessible devices.

Using this baseline, officers will identify coverage gaps, particularly in high-footfall locations, and communities with limited 24/7 access, and prioritise areas where new installations would have the greatest impact. This work will be conducted in partnership with local charities, town and community councils, voluntary groups, and emergency services to reduce duplication, share intelligence, and identify opportunities for co-funding or joint procurement.

Existing partnership structures, including Neighbourhood Networks, the Community Facilities Forum, and the RCT Funders & Support Forum, will be used to support community engagement and ensure the sustainability of new devices, including maintenance and replacement costs. This coordinated, evidence-led approach will support fair access to lifesaving equipment for all communities within the County Borough.

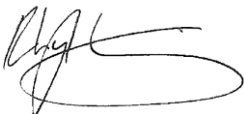
10. That the Council develop and implement a standardise maintenance and monitoring framework for all Council controlled and school-based AEDs, including regular audits and recording mechanisms and sustainable funding.

Corporate Design and Maintenance are working with Education Colleagues and other stakeholders to establish a service level agreement for the future maintenance of the defibrillators that will fall under their remit.

Once again, I would like to thank the Committee and our partners; Save a Life Cymru, Welsh Ambulance Service Trust, RCT Heart Heroes and Cynon Valley Defibrillators for your valuable work in this progressing this lifesaving service.

I hope this letter provides the Committee with assurance that your recommendations, and the resolutions agreed by Full Council, are being progressed as necessary.

Yours sincerely,



Rhys Lewis

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