

Defibrillators In The Workplace

July/2020

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My Story

Seven years ago, my husband suffered a **cardiac arrest** whilst at work. This was not immediately recognised by his colleagues, but thankfully, by some miracle he managed to get himself to A&E just in the nick of time before collapsing whilst in triage.

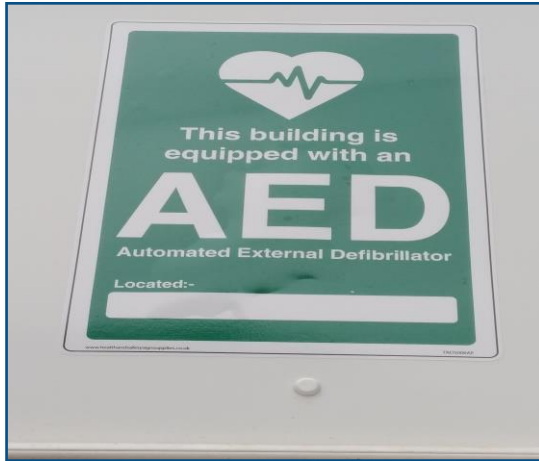
Just like a scene out of ER, after 15-20mins of resuscitation and about 3 or 4 shocks with the paddles he was taken for an emergency angioplasty and then spent several days in the ICU and HDU before being sent home.

It was a horrendous experience for us all, particularly with an 18-month old son to take care of who obviously could not understand what was going on with daddy. Luckily, the fantastic staff at **Bournemouth A&E** saved my husband's life and I'm eternally grateful to them that today he is fit and well.

Given this bit of history, at the beginning of this year, I was really pleased to learn that Kate and Carl had invested in a portable **AED** to keep at our offices at Simplify Consulting.

You may have noticed defibrillators springing up in lots of public places. But did you know that many employers are also investing in having one in the workplace, despite there being no legal requirement to do so?

What is an 'AED'?



*"An **AED**, or Automated External Defibrillator, is used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. It's a sophisticated, yet easy-to-use, medical device that can analyse the heart's rhythm and, if necessary, deliver an electrical shock, or defibrillation, to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm."*

RedCross.org

Anyone can purchase one and prices vary, but our portable one cost around £600. You can also get fixed ones for outside, although these are more expensive. You don't need to have a license for it, but you do need to ensure you test it regularly and change the battery periodically (this is different depending on the model).



Making your AED accessible to the community

Additionally, you can also notify your local community so that your workplace defibrillator could be used for the benefit of people outside the company if required.

We have registered ours on the British Heart Foundation's '**The Circuit**' National Defibrillator Network and also on the '**Save a Life**' app, so anyone who has downloaded the app can see where the nearest registered defibs are.



We've also advertised it in local businesses, a local magazine, on a local Facebook page and we have a sign above our door.



What to do if you suspect a cardiac arrest

If someone is suffering a cardiac arrest, they may display the following symptoms:

- Sudden collapse
- No pulse
- No breathing or not breathing normally (e.g. gasping)
- Loss of consciousness / unresponsive

If you see a person suddenly collapse (or find someone unconscious)

- 1. Call 999**
- 2. Start CPR ***
- 3. Look for a defibrillator**

If there is more than one of you with the victim, one person should continue CPR whilst the other tries to find the nearest defibrillator – they are often found in public places such as train stations, shopping centres, GPs, airports and leisure centres or you could use the Save A Life app to help locate one.

* Various organisations offer free or cheap training courses such as [‘Heartstart’](#) by the British Heart Foundation



Using an AED

The '**Fear Factor**' - Surveys have shown that a high percentage of people would be reluctant or hesitant to step in and use an AED, perhaps for fear or doing more harm than good or because they're unsure or don't realise that the victim is actually in cardiac arrest.

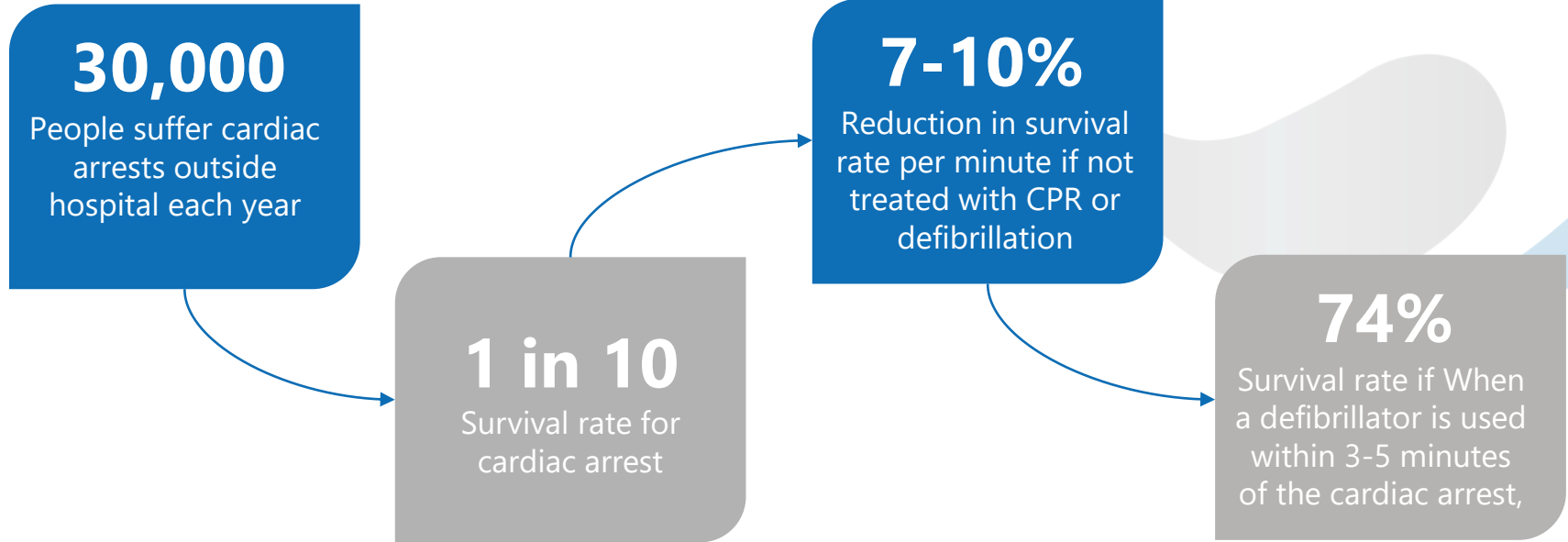
AEDs are designed to be really easy to use by absolutely anyone without any training. In fact, most if not all defibs will actually tell you what to do and when. However, training is available from organisations including St John Ambulance and the Red Cross plus there are numerous videos available online such as [this one from St John Ambulance](#).

Additionally, because they detect the persons heart rhythm, they won't allow you to administer a shock if it's not needed so ***"even if the problem isn't cardiac arrest, using the AED is very unlikely to cause harm."***
- www.health.harvard.edu



Why have an AED in the workplace?

THEY SAVE LIVES!!!..... What other reason could you need for making potentially life-saving equipment available to your staff should any of them unfortunately suffer from a heart attack or cardiac arrest whilst at work.



What can you do?

The following are some ideas on what you can do to make sure you're prepared to help your colleagues in case they ever suffer from a cardiac arrest:

- Make sure you know where your nearest defibrillator is located (this also applies at home – I was recently trying to assist a neighbour in need in an emergency situation, it was the one of the first questions the emergency operator asked and I did not know this information!!)
- Investigate getting a defibrillator in the workplace if you don't already have one
- Make sure you're familiar with how to use one
- Make sure there are adequate first aid training skills amongst yourself and your colleagues and consider arranging a first aid training course to refresh or ensure you all have basic lifesaving skills