



18
K.O.

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

*Gofynner am/
Please ask for:*

Chief Fire Officer
R Smith

Rhif Est/Extn. No.

4401

E-bost/E-mail:

r.smith@mawwfire.gov.uk

Fy Nghyf/My Ref:

RS/RQ/MT

Eich Cyf/Your Ref:

P-04-471

Dyddiad/Date:

15 May 2013

Dear

Sir

Thank you for your correspondence dated 24 April 2013 in which you highlight your wish to seek the views of the Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service in relation to a petition, calling on the Welsh Government to provide funding to ensure Automated External Defibrillators are made available in all Public places in Wales.

In response to the document received, I am pleased to be able to provide you with the view of Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service in regard to this petition.

As a Rescue Service engaged in many levels of intervention in order to protect the people we serve, we would encourage and support any safe and practical measure that could enhance the chances of preventing unnecessary loss of life within our communities.

Much has been written in support of Automatic External Defibrillators and the difference they can make to a heart attack victim's chance of survival. Information provided by The Resuscitation Council (UK) claims that the scientific evidence to support early defibrillation is overwhelming and that delay from collapse to delivery of the first shock is the single most important determinant of survival.

Research carried out by the British Heart Foundation indicates that for every minute that passes without a heart attack victim receiving defibrillation, their chances of survival decrease by 14 per cent. The research also shows that applying a controlled shock within five minutes of collapse provides the best possible chances of the victim surviving.

Within the predominantly rural environment of Wales, medical teams responding to emergencies in remote or isolated communities often encounter delays due to travel distances and difficulties negotiating the road networks serving these areas. Certainly in most instances medical teams are not able to achieve a response standard that would enable shock treatment to be delivered within the 5 minute window recommended by the British Heart foundation.

Some success has been achieved in reducing the time it takes to deliver emergency intervention by the deployment of first responders, people who live or work within the community and can be despatched by or via ambulance control centre to reach a patient more quickly than a conventional ambulance. Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service have supported this scheme for many years and have teams of firefighters who respond as an initial deployment to local medical emergencies. These teams are located strategically across the Service area. The deployment of first responders undoubtedly reduces the time it takes a medical team to reach a patient, but in the case of heart attack victims, although equipped with Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) they cannot consistently be relied upon to deliver shock treatment within the prescribed 5 minutes.

Within rural areas, communities with poor road networks or traffic congestion, where large crowds can be expected to gather and within public places generally AED technology opens a window for the public at the scene of an incident who have access to AED equipment, to take on a key role in supporting our emergency services by being in a position to deliver shock treatment at the earliest moment following an incident of cardiac arrest.

The ILCOR (International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation) Consensus on Science and Treatment Recommendations and the Resuscitation Council UK guidelines state that “while it is highly desirable that those who are called upon to use an AED should be trained in their use, the equipment can be used safely and effectively without previous training. The use of an AED should therefore not be restricted to trained rescuers“. They do however recommend that training should be encouraged in order to help improve correct pad placement and reduce the time taken to delivery of shock treatment.

Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service agree with this perspective on training and whilst we accept that the equipment can be operated by untrained persons, would want to encourage the development of as many trained operatives as possible within our communities, including our staff who live and work there.

Many Fire and Rescue Services across Britain have already been equipped with defibrillators and many have received considerable support from local Ambulance Trusts and the British Heart Foundation. Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service also consider there is significant scope to enhance our life saving ability by equipping our front-line fire appliances with AEDs and we would welcome any such initiative and fully support the training of our staff to operate them.

The buildings owned and operated by Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service are strategically placed within local towns and villages and some could be considered as suitable locations for the positioning of AED equipment which could be accessed by members of the public or by responders. Again we would be very supportive of any request to use our premises for this purpose.

As a Fire and Rescue Service we understand clearly, that the quicker intervention can be delivered, the better the outcome. Our experience of operating within the areas of Mid and West Wales has highlighted to us the difficulties such an area presents to emergency responders in relation to rapid intervention. As stated we already work closely with the Ambulance Trust to help minimise the time taken for medical teams to reach patients, but we believe that the provision of more strategically placed lifesaving equipment and trained people would provide a significant enhancement. We would therefore wish to see as many AEDs located within our towns and villages as possible supported by many trained people as can be provided.

The position we wish to take in relation to this petition therefore is to positively encourage its implementation. In particular Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service supports;

- The placing of Automated External Defibrillators in public places
- The expansion of First Responder Schemes
- Greater availability of Automated External Defibrillators to Fire and other emergency services

Yours sincerely



R Smith
Chief Fire Officer