



NFWI

Resolution Shortlist Briefing Notes

Bystanders can be lifesavers



## **Bystanders can be lifesavers**

***There are over 30,000 out of hospital cardiac arrests a year in the UK and less than one in ten people survive. Women have a lower chance of surviving than men. Early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillating can more than double the chances of survival. We call on WI members to work together to increase public confidence and training in the delivery of CPR and to work with local organisations to help to improve access to defibrillators in their communities to give every person the best chance of surviving a cardiac arrest.***

## **Proposer's position**

The proposer would like to see an increase in public confidence and training in CPR, and see an improvement in the access to defibrillators. She is concerned with the number of cardiac arrests that occur each year, as well as the survival rate, particularly for women. The proposer would like WI members to improve CPR training and awareness in their communities and to work with local organisations to improve access to defibrillators.

## **The scale of the problem**

A cardiac arrest is caused by an electrical problem in the heart. A person undergoing a cardiac arrest will be unconscious and not breathing. Cardiac arrest can be caused by defects to the heart, such as coronary heart disease or heart attack, or external factors such as drug overdose, drowning, or choking.

According to the British Heart Foundation (BHF) the overall survival rate of people suffering from cardiac arrest out of hospital is less than 1 in 10, lower than comparable countries across the world. Every minute without cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation reduces the chance of survival by up to 10%. People who are trained in CPR will buy time for the casualty until professional help arrives.

Research by St John's Ambulance shows that women who go into cardiac arrest in public are less likely to receive CPR from bystanders than men. A woman is 50% more likely than a man to receive the wrong initial diagnosis for a heart attack. Furthermore, over a third of men worry that delivering CPR could cause them to be accused of "inappropriate" touching when giving CPR to a woman. More than 8,200 women in England and Wales could have survived a heart attack if they had been given the same treatment as men between 2003 and 2013.

There is evidence to show that the bystander response can have a huge impact. The Resuscitation Council states that the chance of survival can increase two or threefold when bystander CPR is used. St John's Ambulance's research suggests appropriate training could address the problem, with 64% of all respondents indicating that they would feel more comfortable performing CPR if they received the right education and support.

## The current situation

In February 2024, new figures published by BHF found that nearly half of UK adults (43%) have never learned CPR. Cardiac arrest recognition remains a key priority as it is the first step in triggering the emergency response to cardiac arrest. Creating a CPR-trained society will save more lives, improve public health, and enhance community resilience during emergencies.

The British Heart Foundation offers a free online training tool that can teach CPR, and the correct steps of defibrillator use in just 15 minutes. CPR training is also a part of the Health Education curriculum for secondary students in the UK, although the extent to which this training is being implemented remains unmonitored.

Local community groups and organisations can help to guarantee the availability of defibrillators in their area by applying to have one installed. They can apply for one through the government or apply for funding support for installation costs through their local council or BHF. In 2022, the government announced a £1million fund to increase the number of defibrillators in communities most in need- providing an estimated 1000 new defibrillators in community spaces across England and Wales.

Awareness campaigns are looking at the gender disparity in CPR delivery. For example, the St Johns Ambulance partnership with football Lioness Millie Bright to reassure people that taking action, fast, is the right thing to do, no matter the gender and body shape of the person suffering from cardiac arrest.

## Points to consider

- This resolution would enable WI members to share expertise on CPR and the use of defibrillators amongst members and their local community.
- There are a number of organisations that provide CPR and defibrillator training in the UK including St John Ambulance, The Red Cross, and the British Heart Foundation. The WI could work with these organisations and local schools and encourage local communities to undertake training.
- As there are several organisations and initiatives on this issue, including awareness days specifically echoing the calls of this resolution, is there more that the WI could add?

## How could the WI work on this issue if it was passed?

A full campaign would be developed by the NFWI if the resolution is passed, taking into account developments since then. To help inform your discussions, here are some ways the WI could consider working on the issue.

**At regional and local levels**, WIs could learn how to deliver CPR, making members better-trained bystanders when encountering someone experiencing cardiac arrest. WIs could spread awareness of CPR training courses and the locations of defibrillators in their communities, as well as campaigning for more to be installed where necessary. WIs could campaign and fundraise for their local training facilities to have male and female mannequins so that trainees are more comfortable and confident delivering CPR on bodies with breasts.

**Nationally**, this campaign could enable the NFWI to highlight the gender imbalance in cardiac arrest survival through spreading awareness. This resolution would enable the WI to collaborate with a number of CPR training organisations, including St John's Ambulance, The Red Cross, and the British Heart Foundation.

Events at a national and local level could be structured around celebratory days including World Restart a Heart Day, October 16<sup>th</sup>, which seeks to raise awareness about sudden cardiac arrest and encourage the public to learn hands-on CPR.

## Further information

### St Johns Ambulance

[First Aid Courses, Advice & Volunteering | St John Ambulance \(sja.org.uk\)](https://www.sja.org.uk)

### The Red Cross

[First aid | British Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org.uk)

### The British Heart Foundation

[CPR and defibrillators: how to save a life - BHF](https://www.bhf.org.uk)

## Video Content

### British Heart Foundation free online CPR training

[RevivR](https://www.bhf.org.uk)