

Dechmont Community Council Guide to Installing a Defibrillator

This guide has been put together by Dechmont Community Council to assist any local organisations who are thinking about installing a defibrillator. Our defibrillator was funded by the Village Improvement Fund and installed on the external wall of Dechmont Memorial Hall. This paper is intended as a guide only, there may be additional matters which require your attention.

1. Location.

If you are installing the defibrillator on a council-owned building you will need to obtain permission to do so. A survey of the building must be carried out. The purpose of the survey is to ensure that there are no asbestos considerations in the location where you will install your defibrillator and to make sure that the building can safely accommodate the defibrillator.

You should also consider the location of the defibrillator in relation to any potential users. For example, we installed our defibrillator on the external wall of Dechmont Memorial Hall for the following reasons;

- It is an easily recognisable location.
- It is close to the School and the playing field/park.
- It is close to the Main Street and residential accommodation.
- The Memorial Hall has a power supply which is needed for the box which houses the defibrillator.

2. Select a Contractor.

The defibrillator we selected is battery operated. However, the box that houses it is fitted with a small heater which comes on in the event of cold weather. This prevents the defibrillator from being damaged in cold weather. The heater needs an electrical feed, i.e. the box needs plugged in. Our box is on the outside of the building and the plug is inside.

If you are installing a defibrillator on a West Lothian Council (WLC) owned building, you will need to do one of two things;

1. Use an 'approved contractor'. WLC keep a list of approved electrical contractors. They are approved in so far as they have carried out work for the Council in the past and have submitted risk assessments, method statements, insurance documents etc.

Please note that an 'approved contractor' is a different thing from a 'trusted trader'.

2. If you chose to use an electrical contractor who is not an approved contractor, you will need to submit a number of documents to WLC in advance of the defibrillator getting fitted including risk assessments, method statements, insurance etc. WLC will charge you to look at these documents.

We used an approved contractor as we found this to be the easiest way for us.

Our key contact from WLC in relation to getting the building surveyed and selecting an approved electrical contractor was;

Neil Stavert
Electrical Maintenance Officer
Construction, Property and Design
Finance and Property Services
Direct Dial: 01506281170
Mobile: 07909 906 171
Email: Neil.Stavert@westlothian.gov.uk

3. Purchase.

When considering which defibrillator to purchase, your available funds will be a key consideration. Bear in mind that some of the cheaper defibrillators may have very expensive replacement electrode pads (required each time a defib is used). Some machines are fully automatic (you apply the pads and it will provide a shock if needed, others require the operator to press a button. Others have adult and child capabilities. We purchased an iPAD SP1 Fully Automatic Defibrillator from Defib UK [www.defibuk.co.uk]. As ours is next door to a school it seemed best to have a dual adult and child defib. For the SP1 the pads are the same so there is no additional cost. Please note that there are many suppliers available and lots of different prices online, shop around to get a good deal.

In addition to the defibrillator itself, you will require a box to house the defibrillator in. We opted for a box which was suitable for outdoor use. This was also supplied to us by Defib UK. The box is kept locked to prevent theft.

4. Code for the Box.

We debated for some time whether the box should be locked or not. There are arguments for and against and you should make up your own minds as to what suits your needs best. Obviously, if the box is unlocked it is more readily accessible. However, it is also more likely to be stolen.

5. Register your Defibrillator.

Once you have installed your defibrillator you should register it with the Scottish Ambulance service at www.scottishambulance.com they have a defibrillator access site with online registration. It only takes a few minutes. This is a really important step. If any person calls 999 and the patient requires the use of a defibrillator, they will be directed to their nearest one by the 999 call handler. Therefore, a database of all community use defibrillators is kept and used by the emergency services. When you dial 999 you will be given the location and the code to open the nearest defibrillator. You may wish to keep this in mind when considering where to put your defibrillator - is your building locked in the evening or at weekends? If so, it might be useful to house your defibrillator on the external fabric of the building. The ambulance site allows you to specify the hours which your defib is available. There is lots of information on their site and there is a local representative for each area of Scotland to assist if required - check the website.

In addition to registering your defibrillator with the emergency services, it may also be useful to advertise the location of the defibrillator. For example, we put up posters locally letting people know that we have a defibrillator for community use, and telling people where it is.

6. Familiarisation Sessions.

Our defibrillator has just been installed recently. We are in a fortunate position in that one of our Members is a paramedic. We are providing familiarisation sessions for the community. The purpose of these sessions is to give people confidence to use the defibrillator in the event of an emergency. There are many organisations who will come and provide these sessions for the community, for example www.savealife.scot or St Andrews Ambulance or the Red Cross. Local first responder groups are also often able to provide training sessions.

7. Insurance.

As a Community Council we have insurance through WLC. We called our insurance provider and had the defibrillator added as an additional item. It is advisable to insure your defibrillator.

8. Ongoing Maintenance.

A monthly check should be carried out to ensure that your defibrillator is operating correctly. Modern defibrillators require very little maintenance. There is a light on our defibrillator, as long as the light is on, it is working. The ambulance service ask for a commitment that somebody will be the designated person for the defibrillator. If a defib is deployed, the designated person will be contacted and will then need to restock the pads and consumables and check the battery. This is not onerous. More than one person can do this and help to spread the load.

Having some spares (but not too many as they can be expensive) of the electrode pads, pocket masks, gloves and scissors is essential. Our replacement costs per use are around £45.

**Gillian Anderson, Chair, Dechmont Community Council
May 2019**

With thanks to Julia Barnes, Member and Paramedic, for her guidance and support.