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SM/PQ24720/25

28th May 2025

Deputy Padriag Rice TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ24720/25

To ask the Minister for Health if funding will be provided for an all-island defibrillator registry (details supplied); if so, the timeline for same; the engagement she has had with her counterparts in Northern Ireland in respect of this project;; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Pádraig Rice.

Details: The Circuit Defibrillator Network which has already been implemented by the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS). I understand that at the request of the National Ambulance Service (NAS), the British Heart Foundation (BHF) has recently completed a feasibility study and cost estimate to investigate if it would be possible for NAS to join The Circuit. The BHF have confirmed that it is technically feasible.

Dear Deputy Rice

The Health Service Executive (HSE) National Ambulance Service (NAS) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above parliamentary question that you submitted to the Minister for response.

A key predictor of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) survival is time to defibrillation. With every minute that lapses between patient collapse and defibrillation, the chance of survival decreases by approximately 10-12%. For this reason, increased community defibrillation (i.e. before ambulance arrival) is a critical factor in improving OHCA survival in Ireland. In order to maximise access to community defibrillators, it is international practice for ambulance services to invite the public to register publicly available defibrillators. This means that when a cardiac arrest call is received, ambulance call takers can then provide directions and access instructions for the nearest defibrillator.

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) currently invite members of the public to notify us of defibrillators in their area. The NAS has been notified of approximately 4,500 community defibrillators. While some post-entry data quality checks have been done e.g. to identify duplicates, generally once the defibrillator is added to our dispatch system, there are limited opportunities to carry out further critical quality checks e.g. to ensure pads and batteries are in date and defibrillator remains at the original location. The Circuit – a defibrillator register created and implemented by the British Heart Foundation (BHF) is operating a service that



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has a database of over 106,000 defibrillators in the UK, and provides high quality defibrillator data to all UK NHS Ambulance Trusts, including the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

In the Irish Border corridor, the nearest defibrillator may be in the other jurisdiction and therefore not visible to the ambulance call taker. This jurisdictional issue has been solved for UK NHS Ambulance Trusts through the introduction of The Circuit. All Trusts can view and deploy defibrillators that are outside their jurisdictions, and have full visibility of registered defibrillators when providing cross cover for another Ambulance Trust.

The NAS commissioned the BHF to conduct a study to determine the technical feasibility of implementing The Circuit in the Republic of Ireland. The study concluded that it would be technically feasible, and that the BHF would be willing to progress with implementation of The Circuit as a service to the NAS. It is estimated that the BHF would require a timeframe of approximately 12 weeks to complete the work that would enable the NAS to become an Ambulance User of The Circuit. Our colleagues in NIAS would welcome this development, as it will facilitate full visibility of registered defibrillators on both sides of the border corridor. The HSE NAS are currently investigating funding options to obtain The Circuit as a service to the NAS.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhán Masterson
General Manager
National Ambulance Service