



The Importance of Teaching First Aid and Recent Changes to the Curriculum

The Government has recently announced the inclusion of first aid as a mandatory element of the PHSE curriculum. For primary school children, they can be introduced to age-appropriate basic first aid, for example learning how to call for an ambulance and helping with common occurrences such as burns or choking. Young people in secondary schools will be taught life-saving first aid such as CPR, the recovery position, how to use defibrillators and more complex first aid.

New generation of life savers

The introduction of this new requirement will educate a whole generation of young life-savers. We know prompt and appropriate first aid treatment prevents minor injuries becoming major ones, encourages young people to be more risk-aware and prevents avoidable admission to hospital, so this inclusion is to the benefit of all.

Vital life skills

Equipping a whole generation with these skills will undoubtedly make a major difference to survival rate in the UK. In addition, it should help prevent many avoidable accidents by making people more risk-aware and consequently reduce some of the pressure on the NHS.

As teenagers gain independence and look to push boundaries, it is vital that they are equipped with the life-saving skills to be able to help themselves or others in a medical emergency.

First aid is such an important topic; it needs to be given the attention it requires. Learning first aid is not a tick box exercise but a true life-skill that deserves specialist care and attention.

Great for the CV too

Learning first aid can contribute to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Sports Leadership Awards, babysitting and can be a great skill to add to the UCAS form – particularly for those applying to do medicine or health-related degrees.

The reason for this inclusion in the curriculum and why education saves lives: Every year 270 children die of sudden cardiac arrest at school, and four of every

five cardiac arrests that happen out of hospitals occur in the home. However, often nobody starts CPR because they just don't know what to do. By the time the emergency services arrive, valuable time has been lost and, in many cases, it is too late to save them. In England the ambulance services attempt to resuscitate approximately 28,000 people every year, of whom less than 10% survive.

Shocking survival statistics

Out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates in the UK are currently three times lower than in countries where first aid is taught in schools.

Denmark double (and triple)

In 2005, CPR training became compulsory for all Danish schoolchildren over 11 years of age. Within the next 6 years, the provision of CPR by members of the public more than doubled and survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest tripled.

Stockholm success

A major push to increase public education and the availability of defibrillators in Stockholm has resulted in remarkable positive success rates post cardiac arrest. Once sufficient numbers of people were trained and confident to commence CPR and use a defibrillator immediately on finding someone in cardiac arrest; it led to an astonishing 70% of people surviving.

TEACHING FIRST AID AND CPR TO CHILDREN

Who should be responsible for doing this?

First aid teaching can be taught by existing school staff, or they can bring in

external experts. Both options have cost and resource implications.

Many schools already bring in specialist first aid professionals to provide the hands-on, engaging and practical training to bring the subject to life. This training encourages children to be self-reliant and to be able to help themselves and others in medical emergencies. Children love learning these skills in this way, and it is an invaluable life skill that they will turn to throughout their lives.

What is the best way to teach first aid?

Teaching first aid is a complex, specialist subject. It is a common misconception that first aid can be taught to large numbers at once, for example in a school assembly. This poses the possibility of misunderstanding or misapplying first aid techniques, which could potentially be dangerous as children who have half-listened then attempt to practise half-learned skills on each other or younger siblings.

Ideally, practical first aid courses should be taught at an age-appropriate level to groups of up to 16 children. That way trainers can ensure everyone is actively involved and has fully understood everything they are learning.

Teaching resources

All practical training offered should be tailored to your needs, the needs of your pupils (and budget!). Professional organisations will come armed with a wealth of mannequins, defibrillators, choking aids, bandages and other teaching aids to make the teaching a truly engaging, memorable and enjoyable experience.

First Aid for Life, St John Ambulance, British Red Cross and the British Heart Foundation also offer invaluable, accompanying teaching resources to enhance the practical training.

Online learning

It is possible to equip larger groups of students with these skills through online modular pre-learning and First Aid for Life have created age appropriate modular learning packages to enable students to learn these skills in school with supporting learning resources for teachers. This can be followed up with hands-on training and question and answer sessions which are ideal to consolidate the online learning.

Successful engagement

When first aid is taught practically by first aid experts, the children's engagement levels soar. They love the hands-on nature of the subject, using mannequins and mastering defibrillators.

*Written by Emma Hammett First Aid for Life
www.firstaidforlife.org.uk*

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<https://bit.ly/2StiDzM>, call 020 8675 4036
or email emma@firstaidforlife.org.uk**