

British Heart Foundation (BHF) and the Resuscitation Council UK Education Bill: Third Reading Briefing

The BHF is campaigning for Emergency Life Support (ELS) Skills to become a mandatory part of the curriculum.

- There is a clear need to increase the number of children trained in ELS skills and as a result improve survival prospects for people following a cardiac arrest
- The Education Bill provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that these vital skills are included as a crucial component of the new curriculum
- Such a change has considerable support amongst the public and from several well-respected public health and teaching organisations

Emergency Life Support Skills

ELS skills are the set of actions needed to keep someone alive until professional help arrives. It includes performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), putting an unconscious person in the recovery position, dealing with choking, serious bleeding and helping someone who may be having a heart attack.

These skills are particularly important in cases of cardiac arrest. Many people who might otherwise die could be saved if someone applies ELS at the scene. Evidence shows that around two thirds of cardiac arrests that occur outside of hospital occur in the home, and that nearly half that occur in public are witnessed by bystanders.¹ With each minute that passes in cardiac arrest before defibrillation, chances of survival are reduced by about 10 per cent.²

The Education Bill

The Department for Education's Schools White Paper stated that the new National Curriculum will focus on "essential knowledge and understanding that pupils should be expected to have to enable them to take their place as educated members of society".³ Given the curriculum is being broadly reassessed; we believe the time is right to ensure that essential life skills such as CPR are included.

The Education Bill provides an excellent opportunity to ensure children leave school with essential life skills. It is crucial that ELS are included in this. By teaching children how to save a life in an emergency, we can provide them with essential practical knowledge that could help them support their families and communities in the future.

¹ Viridi, G. et al (2010): London Ambulance Service Cardiac Arrest Annual Report 2008/09

² Nolan, J.P. et al (2010): European Resuscitation Council Guidelines for Resuscitation 2010 Section 1. Executive summary. Resuscitation 2010;81:1219-76

³ Department for Education (2010): The Importance of Teaching – The Schools White Paper 2010

Widespread Support

In February 2011, we commissioned research to assess the views of children, parents and teachers across the UK on the idea of making ELS a part of the curriculum to be taught to all secondary school pupils.⁴

The results showed strong support for this measure.

- 70 per cent of parents said ELS should be taught at school
- 78 per cent of children (11-15 years old) said ELS should be taught at school
- 86 per cent of teachers thought that ELS should be part of the curriculum

The proposal is also supported by a number of organisations and ambulance services, including the British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Physicians, the College of Emergency Medicine, the Joint Royal Colleges Ambulance Liaison Committee and the National Union of Teachers.

What can I do?

- Sign New Clause 3 in Julie Hilling MP's name at the Table Office
- Speak in support of ELS at Third Reading. We are able to provide you with speaking notes and constituency examples where possible

For help with these or more information please contact Gemma Reay, Public Affairs Officer on 020 7554 0154 or email reayg@bhf.org.uk

About the BHF and the Resuscitation Council UK

Since 1996, the BHF has operated the Heartstart programme, helping to train children in ELS skills. To date, Heartstart has successfully trained over 2.6 million people in ELS skills, of which over 760,000 are children.

The Resuscitation Council (UK) is principally involved in producing and disseminating national guidelines in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

⁴ Research was carried out online by OnePoll in February/March 2011, with 2,072 parents, 1,000 children aged 11-15, and 500 teachers polled in the UK