



THE NATIONAL
FIRST RESPONDER NETWORK

News Letter

January 2025

We are often asked “what is a Community First Responder?” Well a Community First Responder is an “Active Citizen”.

“In our view, being an Active Citizen means being aware of, and caring about, the welfare of fellow citizens, recognising that we live as members of communities and therefore depend on others in our daily lives.

Active Citizenship, by its nature, starts with individuals. While the government can facilitate, encourage and support it, ultimately Active Citizenship is about how each one of us can play a responsible role wherever we are and whatever our age, status or roles in life. Equally, Government policy is only effective to the extent that it is developed and implemented in co-operation with many different stakeholders who play important roles in Irish society. In short, Active Citizenship is not just ‘for someone else’ – it is for each one of us - as well as for the Government, business, unions and other organisations.”

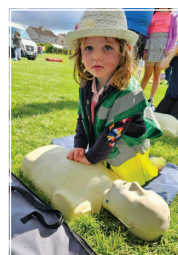
Report by the Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2007

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Respond 
The National First Responder Conference 2024

Saturday 21st September 2024
Mullingar Park Hotel, Mullingar



Tegan O'Byrne, Age 4

THANKS TO...



Please circulate this correspondence with all your members whether reactivated or not, communities wishing to form a CFR scheme and neighbouring PAD schemes.

Reminder Covid 19 & Flu Vaccine



Chief Medical Officer urges uptake of flu and Covid-19 vaccines in run-up to Christmas

<https://www.thejournal.ie/flu-and-covid-vaccine-uptake-ireland-6566475-Dec2024/>

In May of 2021, after submissions by CFR Ireland and WWCFR, it was confirmed that Community First Responders were to be considered as Health Care Workers (HCWs) and so could receive the Covid-19 as part of this cohort.

For more information see: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/covid-19-staff-support/getting-your-vaccine/> Or contact info@cfr.ie or your local CFR Ireland Area Representative.

Community First Responders (CFRs) are also eligible for the winter flu vaccine.

The flu is a contagious viral infection that spreads every winter. Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself against flu.

The best time to get the flu vaccine is before the flu season starts. It is available from October to the end of April each year.

When the flu vaccine becomes available, Healthcare workers (CFRs included) can book a free flu vaccine online. They can also get the vaccine at their GP or pharmacy.

What CFRs need to book a flu vaccine online?

To book an appointment at a healthcare worker flu vaccine clinic, CFRs will be asked for:

- a mobile phone number
- an address or Eircode
- PPS number

A CFRs PPS number is used to find an individual health identifier (IHI). An IHI is a unique number used to identify you when people use a health or social care service.

Covid 19 & Flu Vaccine cont.

If a CFR does not have a PPS Number, they can still get an appointment.

CFRs will need to bring a staff ID card (NAS issued CFR Volunteers will suffice) or a letter from your employer (CFR scheme coordinator) stating that they are a healthcare worker.

Booking a flu vaccine online.

A small number of clinics will provide the flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time. You can check which clinics offer this service when you book online.

Some clinics only vaccinate people who work for their organisation. This may not be apparent when making the booking. Locations like hospitals, clinics etc. may only have enough vaccine for their own staff.

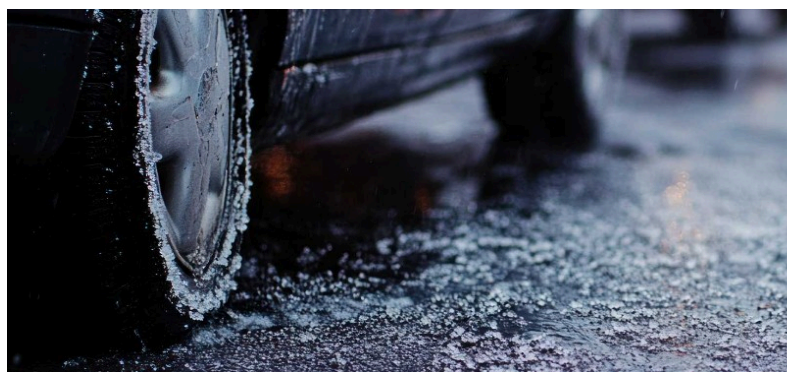
The online booking service is not currently available. It usually becomes available during “Flu season” around October of each year.

Flu vaccine from GP or pharmacy

Healthcare workers can get a free flu vaccine at their GP or pharmacy. Contact your GP or pharmacy to arrange this. CFRs will need to bring the same information as stated above.

For more information see <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/flu-vaccination/healthcare-workers/>

Or contact your local CFR Ireland Area Representative or info@cfr.ie.



Winter Driving

Is your journey necessary?

In extreme weather conditions ask yourself if making a journey by road is necessary? If it is not, you might consider delaying your trip until the weather and road conditions improve. If using the roads in such conditions is unavoidable be prepared. The golden rule is to drive, cycle or walk with extreme care and caution and expect the unexpected.

Is your vehicle ready for winter?

As the saying goes ‘Prevention is better than cure’, so take some time to prepare both your vehicle and yourself for the challenges of winter driving. Don't get caught out when severe weather strikes!

Winter Driving cont.

You should:

- get your vehicle serviced to make sure it is fit and safe for winter driving. You should also carry out regular walkaround checks on the vehicle
- check for wear and tear on wiper blades and replace them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows
- keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level and check you have at least three millimetres of tread depth
- check that your spare wheel is in good condition and is fully inflated. Some cars may have an inflation repair kit instead of a spare wheel. Make sure that you know how to use it
- make sure all vehicle lights are working and clean
- top up with anti-freeze and screen wash.

Advice for vulnerable road users:

During periods of severe weather consider postponing your journey. If the journey is unavoidable, please see the advice below.

Advice to pedestrians and cyclists:

- Visibility and light is reduced in poor weather conditions. Keep safe by making sure you can be seen. Wear bright clothing with reflective armbands or a reflective belt
- Carry a torch in snowy conditions and wear clothing that does not restrict your vision.
- Take extra care when crossing the road or cycling in extremely windy conditions as a sudden gust of wind could blow you into the path of an oncoming vehicle.
- Walk on a footpath, where possible and not in the street. If there is a footpath and it is safe to use, look out for falling debris from above, especially in urban areas.
- In snowy and icy conditions wear appropriate footwear. **DO NOT** underestimate the danger of ice.
- Many slips and falls happen in places people regard as safe and secure, typically outside their front door, on the doorstep, on the path or while getting out of the car. When you approach a footpath or roadway that appears to be covered with snow or ice, always use extreme caution.
- Walk on the right-hand side of the road, facing traffic if there are no footpaths.
- Cyclists should ensure that they and their bike are visible to other road users by investing in a good set of front and rear lights (white at the front, red at the back) and by wearing clothes that help you be seen on your bike such as bright and light reflective items.

Useful links

- Visit the [Department of Transport](#) for updates on public transport.
- Tune in to your [local radio station](#) to get latest updates in your county.
- Check the weather at [Met Eireann](#).
- For updates on conditions on motorways and national roads visit the [TII website](#).
- Check the [garda website](#) for travel warnings.
- For updates on the latest traffic news visit [AA Roadwatch](#).

Anti-choking devices donated to hundreds of schools despite HSE advising against use.

It has been brought to our attention that CFR schemes were considering including Anti-choking devices in their Kit Bags. They are not part of CFR CPGs. They are not on the equipment list for Community First Responders



Anti-choking devices donated to hundreds of schools despite HSE advising against use
Meals provider Lunch Bag is donating LifeVac devices to schools despite HSE advice that anti-choking devices should not be used due to lack of research on efficacy

Hundreds of primary schools across Ireland are being donated “anti-choking devices”, despite health service guidance stating they should not be used due to a lack of research on their efficacy.

The Lunch Bag, a company that provides meals to primary schools across the State, announced this week it was providing anti-choking devices called LifeVac to the schools for which it provides food. The device uses suction to dislodge food or objects that are obstructing a person’s airway.

In a statement announcing the partnership on its website, the company said it believes in “making every bite safe and every meal fun”.

“That’s why we’ve donated a super-cool anti-choking device, the LifeVac, to every school we service,” the statement said. “This life-saving gadget is here to add an extra layer of safety for thousands of children across Ireland – because keeping you safe is what we’re all about.”

anti choking device continued

However, the Health Service Executive (HSE) advice states: **“Do not use anti-choking devices if your child is choking.”** “These are devices that clear the airway by using suction. There is not enough research on how well they work and how safe they are. If you use an anti-choking device you could delay getting the correct treatment for choking,” the advice, dated 2022, said.

The Irish Association of Emergency Medicine (IAEM) issued a similar warning in March 2023, stating it “does not currently support their use due to the lack of research on the safety or effectiveness of these devices”.

The association said it had “concerns that the use of these devices could delay established treatments for choking”.

“Parents with young children are advised to familiarise themselves with first-aid techniques and follow the HSE guidelines on choking for babies under one and children aged one year or older,” it said. “These steps are easy to learn and can be initiated promptly and effectively without the requirement for equipment.”

Both the HSE and the IAEM confirmed this remains their current position.

Matt Banagan, sales and marketing director of LifeVac Europe, told The Irish Times the company was very confident of the safety and efficacy of the product.

It is a “registered and regulated medical device to be used when first aid fails or cannot be performed, as stated by medical device regulatory bodies. LifeVac is not a first-aid device or intended to replace any first-aid techniques, LifeVac is a last resort before death,” he said.

Mr Banagan said the HSE guidance “isn’t really up to date because there is 13 peer-reviewed medical publications behind LifeVac. I’d say about 70 per cent of our publications came out since 2022.”

“I’m actually going to reach out to the HSE and advise them to review our publications,” he said, adding that the device had saved 3,220 lives worldwide to date, of which more than 2,000 were children.

Irish Times December 8th 2024



Irish Heart Foundation

**Beware of
“Cough CPR”**

“There is no medical evidence to support the use of Cough CPR”

You may have noticed information doing the rounds on social media about so called “Cough CPR” which mistakenly claims that if you are alone and suffer a cardiac arrest, coughing vigorously can help save your life. **This is not true.**

There is no medical evidence to support the use of “Cough CPR” and in accordance with international guidelines and best practice, the Irish Heart Foundation does not endorse this practice.

The 2010 American Heart Association Guidelines for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiovascular Care state that “cough CPR” is not useful for unresponsive victims and should not be taught to lay rescuers.

"In the event of either having chest pain or finding someone collapsed, the emergency services need to be called immediately."

Brigid Sinnott, BLS Support Coordinator, Irish Heart Foundation

According to Brigid Sinnott, Basic Life Support Coordinator with the Irish Heart Foundation, “the message we need to get to the public is very simple, in the event of either having chest pain or finding someone collapsed, the emergency services need to be called immediately on 999 or 112 . If the person is unresponsive or not breathing, then they need CPR. *(courtesy of the Irish Heart Foundation)*

**Defibtech AEDs
unauthorised
labels attached**

**HPRA warns of
unauthorised labelling
on some Defibtech
AED pads**

As you are aware, from our correspondence from Monday October 14th, a number of Defibtech automated external defibrillator (AED) pads, supplied to the Irish market have been affixed with unauthorised labels. This could lead to expired AED pads being used after their shelf life which, in turn, could potentially result in a poor electrical connection and reduced energy delivered to a patient in cardiac arrest.

The unauthorised labels, with incorrect expiry date were applied outside of Defibtech's control.

This affects the Irish market only.

Pads supplied by OxygenCare are not affected.

HPRA warns of unauthorised labelling on some Defibtech AED pads



There are a large number of Defibtech AEDs in the country.

They are in hotels, gyms, sports clubs, workplaces, Public Access Defibrillators etc. If you or your colleagues are aware of Defibtech AEDs in your community, could you please make the owners/managers aware of this serious issue, don't assume someone else has. Please inform them of Defibtech Field Safety Notice (FSN) (see below). Please seek owners/managers permission before you inspect any Defibtech AED.

CFR Ireland has been in communication with the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and Defibtechs Irish agent, OxygenCare with a view to;

1. Removing all unauthorised labelled electrode pads from all affected Defibtec AEDs around Ireland and returning them to Oxygen Care. Full details are in the link below including how to identify the unauthorised label and have them replaced. Defibtechs/OxygenCare will replace the unauthorised labelled electrode pads Free of Charge.
2. If there are invoices available for any of the AED pads with unauthorised labels attached, it would be very helpful if you could send copies of them, along with the AED pads to OxygenCare when returning the unauthorised labelled electrode pads.

Please also email a copy of the invoice/s to the HPRA (devices@hpra.ie, using case ref. CRN00FQ2D) along with a photo of the related unauthorised labelled AED pad.

Please see link to the HPRA press release below, should you wish to share with your CFR members and the owner/managers of Defibtech AEDs. The link to Defibtechs Field Safety Notice (FSN) is linked within. There is also information posted on the HPRA social media accounts.

HPRA warns of unauthorised labelling on some AED pads

We urge all owners/manager Owners of Defibtech AEDs to check AED pad labels.

OxygenCare can only replace unauthorised labelled electrode pads displaying “in date”.

If you need any further assistance, please contact info@cfr.ie.



Connecting for Life

HSE - National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)

INFORMATION PIECE:

THE NATIONAL OFFICE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION:

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) was established to strategically lead on suicide prevention across the HSE and in collaboration with multiple sectors by way of implementation of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide.

Ten local Connecting for Life Suicide Prevention Action Plans have been developed across the country with the aim to empower and support individuals and communities to respond to suicide while also improving access to supports and services – the ultimate aim being that more people receive the help that they need at the right time and in the right place.

The plans are led by the HSE Mental Health Services and co-ordinated by HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs). There are 23 ROSP positions based across the nine HSE Community Healthcare Organisation areas. Contact details: www.hse.ie/nosp/resourceofficers/

The role includes but is not limited to:

- Being the designated lead for the development and implementation of Connecting for Life at HSE regional level.
- Enhance cooperation and collaboration between agencies working in suicide prevention and suicide bereavement.
- Supporting local communities in the area of suicide prevention, intervention and postvention (bereavement support).
- Responding to identified issues and emerging needs related to suicide prevention in the community.
- Involvement in local, regional and national development of policies protocols and guidance documents.
- Research and evaluation to further inform service developments and initiatives.

Information and Resources:

A range of booklets and leaflets on suicide, self-harm and mental health are available from the NOSP or partner agencies: www.hse.ie//nosp/resources/booklets/

You can also order printed copies from the Mental Health section of healthpromotion.ie.

Training and Education Programmes:

A range of standardised online and face to face education and training initiatives are provided by NOSP and the ROSPs which are available, free of charge, to the general public, community care givers, professionals and volunteers with the aim of creating awareness and improving capacity to provide life-saving support.

Let's Talk About Suicide

‘Let’s Talk About Suicide’ is a free, online suicide prevention training programme from the HSE suitable for those over 18yrs. It helps people to develop their skills to keep others safe from suicide – to identify people who are at risk, confidently ask about the topic of suicide and connect them with resources that can help them stay safe.

This introductory programme uses a mix of guided online content, video and interactive questions. You can start and stop the programme at you own convenience. On average, the programme will take 60 minutes to complete, but you can work at your own pace.

- To enrol and complete Let’s Talk About Suicide, visit traininghub.nosp.ie.
- It is recommended that anyone recently bereaved may wish to wait 12 months before engaging in this type of suicide prevention training.

Information with regard to face to face programmes available throughout the country, such as safe TALK and ASIST, is advised on: www.hse.ie/connecting-for-life/upcoming-training/

**Community
First
Responder
Group Profile**



1. Name/Face Book address/ Instagram address?

Dungarvan Community First Responders.

FB: Dungarvan Community First Responders - Instagram: Dungarvan_First_Resonders

Dungarvan CFR Profile cont.

2. Date Launched?

17th September 2022

3. Number of Responders

15



4. Have you placed or have you plans to place PAD AEDs in your community?

We have 3 AEDs in the town of Dungarvan

5. Do you or have any plans to carry out public CPR training in 2025?

We will be visiting the local primary school.

6. What was your best fund-raising idea?

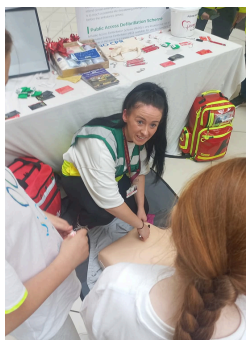
At the local shopping Centre, we highlighted the importance of knowing how to perform CPR, also meeting and speaking to the public and raising awareness.

7. What was your worst fund-raising idea?

A major truck show, where we were lost amongst the other groups and stalls on the day.

8. What is your best recruiting method for recruiting new Responders?

Normally through FB but also through flyers we had created to distribute at local events.



9. Are you planning any CPR awareness events within the next 12 months?

Yes we are hoping to teach CPR and AED use to residents association of local housing estates.

10. As CFRs are on the “Good List” what did you asking Santa Clause for this Christmas?

A full Body Mannequin, if possible, but no pressure. Obviously, there might not be enough room on the sleigh for the both Santa and it!

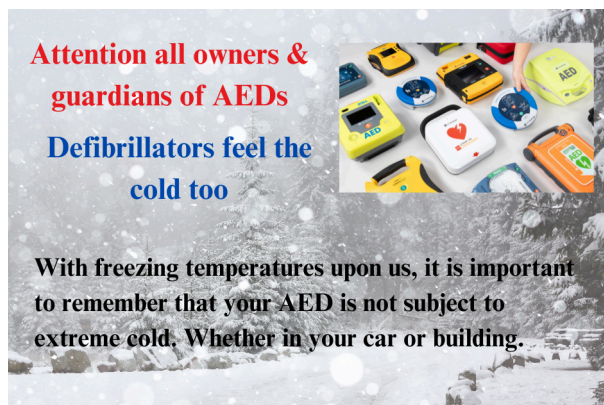


11. When, where and what is your next group social night out?

We meet up for coffee mornings when possible. We are hoping to fit lunch in January. Sometimes it's difficult to get everyone together at same time.

12. A 4-line funny CFR story?

When at a call, a patients wife said she was going to bed while we waited with him for Ambulance. She had enough of her husband whinging over his hip after a fall.



**Defibrillators
feel the cold too**

How does lower temperatures affect Automated External Defibrillator performance?

Impact on Batteries: Cold temperatures can significantly impact the life and performance of defibrillator batteries. They drain faster in the cold, meaning the device might not have enough power when needed. This could delay or even prevent a life-saving shock in an emergency.

Freezing Electrode Pads: Many defibrillator pads contain a water-based gel that allows for proper conductivity and adhesion to the skin. When exposed to freezing temperatures, this gel can freeze, rendering the pads unusable. This would prevent the defibrillator from analysing the heart rhythm and delivering a necessary shock.

Internal Component Damage: While less common, extreme cold can also damage the internal components of a defibrillator, leading to malfunctions or complete failure. Given the current freezing temperatures and threaten snowfall in many parts of the country, it's crucial to take steps to protect AEDs:

- Avoid leaving defibrillators in cars: The temperature fluctuations inside a car can be even more extreme than outside, putting additional stress on the device.
- Defibrillators stored indoors: Many dressing rooms, porches, foyers, lobbies etc. are just as lightly to freeze as outdoors. Ideally, keep AEDs in warm spaces or stored in a heated cabinet where temperatures can remain within the manufacturer's

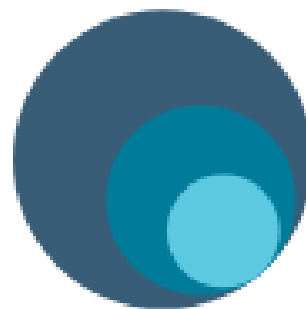
Defibrillators feel the cold too cont.

recommended range (usually 0°C to 50°C, but see manufacturers specifications for more details).

- Heated cabinet where temperatures can remain within the manufacturer's recommended range (usually 0°C to 50°C, but see manufacturers specifications for more details).
- Heated cabinets: For outdoor public access defibrillators (PADs), in order to maintain optimum performance of AEDs, they should be stored in a heated cabinet to maintain optimal temperature regardless of the weather.
- Regularly check battery levels: Monitor battery levels more frequently during cold weather and replace them if needed.

All AEDs should be checked regularly to ensure that remain functional and ready to use in case of an emergency, even during the cold and snowy winter months. Remember, a properly functioning defibrillator can be the difference between life and death.

Do Community First Responder schemes need to register with the Charities Regulator?



An Rialálaí Carthanais
Charities Regulator

We are often asked if Community First responders schemes need to register with the Charity Regulator?

Do CFR schemes require “Charity Status”?

Yes, all CFR schemes meet the criteria to necessitate registering with the Charity Regulatory Authority (CRA). It has nothing to do with fundraising or money, it is more about having governance in place. Once community groups are interacting with the community, unless they are exempt, they should register with the CRA.

The Charity Test



Charity Regulator cont.

CFR schemes “pass the Charity test”?

CFR schemes are not an excluded body.

CFR schemes have a charity purpose.

All CFR schemes activities promote a charitable purpose.

CFR schemes do provide Public Benefit.

CFR schemes operated in Ireland.

Registration with the Charities Regulator and having a Registered Charity Number (RCN) are separate to having a CHY number from the Revenue Commissioners. A CHY number is the number allocated by the Revenue Commissioners to charities which have been granted charitable tax exemption.

CFR Schemes can apply for a CHY number if they wish; however, it is more admin. and could mean addition annual cost compiling accounts.

Most of the document's schemes needed to register with the Charities Regulator are on the Becomeacfr website. Search <https://becomeacfr.ie/documents/> and click “Charity Setup”. For the extra documents you can contact CFR Ireland info@cfr.ie.

You will have to nominate the scheme Trustees. This is a responsible job. Several schemes have come to us saying that they are adding their Trustees to their PL Insurance. There is separate insurance for them. More expenditure!

For more information or explanation just contact you local CFR Ireland Representative or contact info@cfr.ie or visit <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities>.



**20 years of
Community First
Responding in Ireland**

In 2025 we will be celebrating 20 years of Community First Responding in Ireland.

Since the first CFR schemes launched in January 2005 Community First Response there have been many changes.

In 2005:

- There was no Cardiac First Responder course. CFRs were taught AHA HS Family & Friends adult, child & infant, patient assessment, oxygen administration.
- Initial CFR training was 2 days.

20 years of Community First Responding in Ireland cont.

- CFRs had to “recertify” every 90 days.
- CFRs couldn’t administer aspirin.
- CFRs administered oxygen to patients suffering chest pain.
- The compression to breath ratio was 15:2 (it changed to 30 compression to 2 breath after the ILCOR recommendation of 2005).
- The compression rate was 80/100 per minute for adults and children and 120 for infants.
- There were no “smart phones”.
- The NEOC centre hadn’t been established.
- There was no automated text messaging.
- CFRs were dispatched by voice calls, from regional dispatch centres.
- In 2005, the “estimated” survival rate for out of hospital cardiac was 1%. The “Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Register” was initiated in 2007.

