

Services

COMMUNITY
HEARTBEAT

The Community HeartBeat Trust



With the increasing availability in communities of defibrillators, the challenge for any local response group is how to be contacted in the least possible time. Out of hospital Cardiac Arrest tends to happen in the home in some 67% of SCA (London Ambulance Service data) and in these cases it is highly likely that there is only one person with the casualty. To get help quickly and to get another member of the community to come and help with CPR, or to fetch the community defibrillator, is therefore a challenge.

Where formal Community First Responder schemes exist, the ambulance service will contact them after a 999 call. But what about areas where no CFR exist, and the community is reliant on its own helpers, or do not wish formal CFR schemes?

Villages like Carlton (Leicestershire) has six volunteers willing to respond in the event of a Cardiac Arrest in the village. In addition to the village residents, each volunteer helper has been further trained in how to recognise a Cardiac Arrest, and how to undertake CPR and administer the defibrillator. Other villages have similar schemes. When there is an emergency in the village 999 is always called, followed by the village emergency number which rings simultaneously every one of the phones. The first volunteer to answer takes the call and all other phones stop ringing.



The first volunteer can take any details and rush to the patient and commence CPR or can go to collect the defibrillator, or just to be available to assist as required. This saves precious time and a second volunteer on hand to assist. The local ambulance service can also have the village emergency number and can call for assistance from the local village helpers as well.

The Community Heartbeat Trust now provides a service to help villages install and run a Village Emergency Telephone System, or VETS. This is provided at cost on an annual basis to the village, and uses a simple memorable number unique for the village. The system can also be used for any emergency where additional help is required from neighbours, or to contact the CHT.

The availability of VETS helps villages whether or not they are using a CHT provided project, and gives a level of reassurance to the elderly, those living alone, and to the infirmed, that there is always help on hand.



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