

Life Lessons

IS TEACHING FIRST AID IN SCHOOLS REALLY WORTH THE TIME AND EFFORT INVOLVED? JESS HUBBARD CERTAINLY THINKS SO...

With so many important topics and issues competing for space on the timetables of our secondary schools it is simply not possible to accommodate them all. Unfortunately, the teaching of first aid is to some extent a victim of the time-poor nature of modern education. From my perspective, this is a great shame when you spell out the benefits of learning such basic skills.

Not only can learning first aid literally save lives, first aid education can equip secondary school students with many other advantages; enhancing young people's confidence, team working and leadership skills. The perception is that first aid is time consuming and costly to teach, but given the actual resources required, there's no reason why it shouldn't be an integral part of the secondary school experience – in much the same way work experience is today. As with a work placement, first aid can be fun, interactive, and educational while teaching children the skills to help and care for others – and at both KS 3 and 4, it fits in the curriculum under PSHE, science and physical education.

To help teachers there are many free first aid training resources, offered by St John Ambulance and other training providers, which include complete lesson plans tailored for KS 3 and 4 so that students can be taught how to be the difference between life and death. As schools are already obliged to have a number of designated first aiders in the environment, these individuals can share their knowledge with pupils by using these resources. Skills such as how to treat someone who is choking, severely bleeding or in cardiac arrest and needs cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can be taught in as little as an hour. Training young people in this way can equal hundreds of life savers not only in the school but in the wider community.

First aid in action

There are lots of examples out there of young life saving individuals, giving weight to the idea that first aid should become more of a priority in schools. One in particular is Sam Herbert, 15, who used his first aid knowledge in May 2013 to save the life of a man who had collapsed on the street. While on his way home, Sam saw the



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jess Hubbard is a young people's programme officer at St John Ambulance, and organising the charity's Big First Aid Lesson (www.sja.org.uk/bigfirstaidlesson) launching on Friday 20 June. It will be the first ever free online first aid session streamed live and direct into classrooms across the country.

man fall to the ground and found him unconscious but still breathing. With the help of his friend, he placed the man into the recovery position but noticed that he was quickly deteriorating and no longer breathing. He immediately turned the man onto his back and began CPR. However, Sam was born with a congenital heart condition, which has required numerous operations and reduces his strength – so he asked for the help of a passer-by and instructed her how on to perform the life saving technique successfully. Fortunately, the 55-year-old man later regained consciousness, thanks to Sam's swift intervention.

And it's not only individuals; some schools are integrating first aid at the heart of their daily functions. Take Endon High School in Staffordshire – with 700 students and 70 staff, the school is well aware of the risks first aid

incidents pose on a day-to-day basis, which is why it has taken action to ensure that every person on its premises has the potential to be a life saver.

More than 25% of Endon's staff already hold a first aid certificate, with this knowledge being transferred to their young people. In the last year alone, the school trained every pupil in basic first aid. It also encourages widespread discussion around the topic of first aid, placing the issue at the centre of school life. This includes holding assemblies, updating a first aid notice board and setting its young people projects to design first aid resources, while promoting the technology that is already available.

We understand that not all schools have the capability to set first aid high on the agenda, which is why we're constantly working at ways that we can help them enrich children with this knowledge, without it adding excessively to teachers' workloads, through events such as the Big First Aid Lesson launching on Friday 20 June (www.sja.org.uk/bigfirstaidlesson). However, I cannot stress too much how important it is for young people to have access to such vital skills. We can't afford to wait for first aid to appear on the curriculum, when teachers and schools have the power to teach young people these skills right now.

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