

South Western Railway to install defibrillators at all of its staffed stations

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South Western Railway (SWR) is to install publicly accessible automated external defibrillators at all 154 of the staffed stations on its network.

The train operator, which is one of the largest in the country with stations across South West London, Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire Dorset, Wilshire, Somerset, and Devon, is investing over half a million pounds in the project as part of its commitment to safety and serving local communities.

The defibrillators will be placed in protective cabinets as close as possible to the front entrance of the stations, to be used day or night in the event of cardiac incidents at or near stations.

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) estimates that there are around 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests every year in the United Kingdom, and tragically just 1 in 10 people survive.

During a cardiac arrest, every minute counts. The immediate use of CPR and defibrillators can double the chances of survival. Expanding the availability of these machines can, therefore, be lifesaving.

Station staff and local ambulance services will be provided with the codes to unlock the cabinets and access the machines, which they can provide to members of the public in an emergency.

Moreover, the locations will be added to 'The Circuit' – the BHF's database. Once registered, a defibrillator is visible to NHS ambulance services who can direct 999 callers to its location so it can be used to help save lives.

A heating system will ensure that the defibrillators can maintain their normal operating temperature. A monitoring system will also send an alert if a machine malfunctions or the battery is low, ensuring it is always ready to use.

The rollout of the machines across 154 stations, which begins this month, is expected to be completed in the summer.

The announcement of the defibrillator installation project coincides with the naming of an SWR train after the Alex Wardle Foundation in a ceremony held at London Waterloo station yesterday. Watch a video of the naming [here](#).

SWR has partnered with the Alex Wardle Foundation to help raise awareness of sudden arrhythmic death syndrome (SADS), when someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly from a cardiac arrest, particularly young, apparently healthy, people.

The charity was set up in memory of Alex Wardle, a medical student and son of an SWR operations trainer, who passed away from SADS in March 2016.

His father, Steve Wardle, has worked for SWR for 38 years and, along with other members of Alex's close family and friends, he set up the charity to help further understanding of SADS and prevent deaths from the condition.

Together with SWR Managing Director Claire Mann, Steve Wardle unveiled the Alex Wardle Foundation logo on car number 23, the age his son was when he passed away, of a Class 444 train.

Since it was set up, SWR has raised more than £7,000 for the charity to contribute community defibrillators as well as training courses for their use. This helped inspire SWR's decision to fund defibrillators for all its staffed stations.

Claire Mann, alongside SWR colleagues as well as Steve Wardle and other members of the Alex Wardle Foundation, took part in defibrillator training at the event.

Claire Mann, Managing Director of South Western Railway, said:

"I'm honoured to have unveiled SWR's Alex Wardle Foundation train at London Waterloo alongside Alex's inspirational father Steve, who has served the railway for so many years and whose foundation we are proud to support.

“Sudden arrhythmic death syndrome and other heart conditions can impact us all. As part of SWR’s commitment to the local communities we serve, I’m so pleased that we are installing defibrillators at every single one of our staffed stations, which could very well prove to be lifesaving.”

Steve Wardle, Alex Wardle’s father and founder of the Alex Wardle Foundation, said:

“It is wonderful to see this vision come to life. Having worked on the railway for nearly 40 years, I am thankful of the railway family’s support. March 2023 will mark 7 years since Alex’s death and, although I am still a grieving parent, I feel proud of everything that we have achieved to support our community.

“This is such a momentous occasion and a showcase of everyone’s dedication. Defibrillators save lives and I hope that one day, if needed, it will save someone and their family true heartbreak. We are extremely grateful, and this is such an exciting opportunity.”

More information about the Alex Wardle Foundation can be found on its [website](#).

Photo credit: South Western Railway