

Black cab drivers now equipped to save lives

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CABBIES in Liverpool have become potential lifesavers.

The Oliver King Foundation, through Liverpool City Council, invited hackney cab drivers to volunteer to carry defibrillators in their vehicles and undergo training in how to use them.

Now, 40 drivers, who between them drive 20 black cabs, have either just completed or are about to undergo their training.

And Mark King - whose 12-year-old son, Oliver, died from Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome (SADS) in 2011,



Oliver King - died in 2011



Mark King, far left, of The Oliver King Foundation, with some of the Liverpool taxi drivers trained in how to use defibrillators

after winning a swimming race at King David High School, in Childwall - stressed that this was just the start.

He said: "This is a great Liverpool story, and it all began with Liverpool City Council's licensing officers."

The council's licensing team has a fleet of five vehicles which are out and about across the city 24 hours a day. These were equipped with defibrillators, and the staff have been trained how to use them.

And Mark added: "It's wonderful that Liverpool taxi drivers, after an appeal by the council, have now come on board. We have just trained a group of 20 drivers and are about to train another 20, while we are working with Unite, the taxi drivers' union. Hope-

fully, this will lead to many more drivers coming forward to volunteer for training and to have life-saving defibrillators in their black cabs."

A training officer with the city council, Karl Lloyd, explained: "Equipment like this really can make all the difference in a medical emergency. People are naturally wary about using a defibrillator, but the latest versions are fully automated and do all the work for you."

The Oliver King Foundation continues to campaign to get defibrillators installed in every school and public building in the UK. It has already distributed 4,200 defibrillators and trained more than 60,000 people in how to use them, while at least 40 lives have been saved thanks to the Foundation's work.

SADS is the term used to describe heart conditions that can cause sudden death - usually among young people aged between 12 and 35. And Mark said: "As a father, I was horrified to discover that we lose up to 19 young lives a week through cardiac arrest.

"We set up the Foundation to raise awareness about Oliver's condition and how important defibrillators are.

"Ultimately, we want to see a defibrillator wherever you see a fire extinguisher.

"I am only a dad, but I am a dad on a mission to stop anyone else going through what my family has gone through. It is initiatives such as this one from the city council that will really help. We are proud to support it."

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