

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2218: Introduce mandatory women's health training for all GPs and NHS healthcare professionals, lodged by June Smillie on behalf of Nicola's

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

Petition [PE2218](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce mandatory women's health training for all GPs and NHS healthcare professionals.

The petition was lodged by June Smillie [on behalf of Nicola's](#), an organisation campaigning to end [medical misogyny](#) in women's healthcare, and provide a shared space for women to feel heard and supported. The organisation was founded in memory of Nicola Thyne, who died by suicide after living with chronic pain from endometriosis.

Women's health inequalities

Research conducted by [the Fawcett Society and Benenden Health](#) in 2023 found that 60% of women who responded to the survey had experienced having a health condition that was not taken seriously by a medical professional. 35% of respondents had avoided seeking medical support due to fear of dismissal and previous negative experiences.

An inquiry report published by the [UK Parliament's Women and Equalities Committee](#) in 2024 highlighted that medical misogyny led to women and girls feeling dismissed and left to suffer when experiencing severe pain due to conditions such as endometriosis, adenomyosis, and heavy menstrual bleeding. Such conditions can have a considerable impact on the daily lives, education, employment, and relationships of those affected, particularly as many women and girls face long waits for diagnosis and treatment.

The Scottish Government [commissioned a research project in 2023](#) exploring women's experiences of discrimination, and the impact on their health. This research informed the development of the Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan. The researchers highlighted a number of broad issues identified by participants in relation to their experiences of healthcare. Women reported feeling ignored and dismissed when attempting to seek healthcare, a common theme across research in this area. Participants also highlighted systemic gender bias in the healthcare system, feeling that health and healthcare are [informed by "default male" stereotypes](#).

Some participants also felt that they faced additional discrimination based on factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and race. [Phase Two of the](#)

[Women's Health Plan](#) commits to taking an intersectional approach to women's health, addressing the inequalities that affect the health of women and girls.

Overview of current women's health training provision

The [UK Government's response](#) to the Women and Equalities Committee's 2024 inquiry report highlighted several areas of existing women's health training provision for doctors. The General Medical Council's [Medical Licensing Assessment](#) (MLA) is undertaken by all medical students graduating from UK universities. International doctors wishing to join the UK medical register must take the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test, which mirrors the competencies covered in the MLA.

The MLA covers [a number of topics related to women's health](#), including obstetrics and gynaecology, reproductive health, menopause, and chronic conditions such as endometriosis and polyendocrine metabolic ovarian syndrome (PMOS – formerly known as polycystic ovarian syndrome).

Women's health issues including gynaecology, sexual and reproductive health, urinary incontinence, and breast health are also covered in the [curriculum for trainee GPs](#) developed by the Royal College of General Practitioners.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has established a series of [standards for nursing and midwifery education](#), which must be adhered to by universities when developing their curriculum. Although these standards are less prescriptive than the GP curriculum with regard to the specific subjects covered, they set the expectation that nurses and midwives will receive appropriate training to enable them to offer [compassionate, person-centred care](#) to all patients.

Healthcare professionals are encouraged and expected to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) as part of their ongoing learning. Some of the CPD options available to healthcare professionals cover women's health issues. The [Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan: Phase Two](#) states that Scotland now has bespoke training packages on menstrual health and menopause for general practice and others working in primary care. These training modules are available to NHS professionals in Scotland via the [Turas Learn platform](#). The modules are not currently mandatory.

NHS Education for Scotland conducted a learning needs analysis for [General Practice Nurses](#) (GPNs) in 2025. The analysis identified training in women's health as a key learning need for GPNs. The learning needs analysis is being used to guide the development of learning resources for GPNs.

Scottish Government actions

In [its written response to petition PE2218](#), the Scottish Government stated that it is not within the Government's gift to mandate clinical training of any type. Such decisions regarding training provision for trainee and practising healthcare professionals are the responsibility of the relevant UK-wide professional body. The Scottish Government's response stated that in its view, the petition's request is not practical or achievable.

However, the Scottish Government has taken some broader steps to improve women's healthcare and raise awareness of women's health issues. Its Women's Health Plan seeks to address some of the health inequalities affecting women and girls. As explored earlier in this briefing, Phase Two of the Women's Health Plan committed to allocating free women's health training modules for healthcare professionals, which are now available on the Turas Learn website.

The Scottish Government also provided funding to the Royal College of General Practitioners to develop an [endometriosis training package](#) for GPs, which can be accessed by GPs online.

Scottish Parliament actions

There has been no specific Scottish Parliament action on this topic to date.

Key Organisations and relevant links

- [Nicola's](#) – Charitable organisation founded by the petitioner, which aims to create a safe space for women to feel heard, connected, and supported. Founded in memory of the petitioner's family member Nicola Thyne, who lived with chronic pain caused by endometriosis, and died by suicide shortly after a cancelled planned operation for her condition.
- [The Women's Health Plan – Phase Two](#) – The Scottish Government's plan to improve health services and health outcomes for women and girls in Scotland.

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21 August 2026

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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