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Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2264: Include perimenopause and menopause education in Scotland's school curriculum, lodged by Lynn Stewart

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

Petition PE2264 calls on the Scottish Parliament to include age-appropriate education about perimenopause and menopause in Scotland's school curriculum as part of health education, so that young people are better informed and prepared for this stage of women's lives.

Perimenopause and menopause

Perimenopause and menopause are different stages of the transition that women experience when their periods are coming to an end. Perimenopause refers to the time from the onset of menopausal symptoms until after a woman experiences her last period. Periods will usually start to become less frequent over a few months or years before they stop. They might become more irregular, heavier, or lighter. For some women, they may stop suddenly.

Menopause is when a woman stops having periods. A woman is considered to be postmenopausal when she has not had a period for 12 months.

Although menopause is a natural event and normal life transition, it is often accompanied by symptoms that can impact on the day-to-day life of those who experience them. There are a wide range of menopausal symptoms, and each individual may have a different experience of menopause. Alongside changes to the menstrual cycle, some of the most common symptoms experienced by perimenopausal and menopausal women include brain fog, fatigue, hot flushes, loss of libido, and low mood or anxiety.

Awareness of perimenopause and menopause among young people and the general population

Though research on this topic is limited, the available evidence suggests that public knowledge and awareness of perimenopause and menopause symptoms is low. A 2022 survey conducted by University College London found that 68.2% of the 947 perimenopausal female respondents had only begun learning about perimenopause after experiencing symptoms. More than 90% of respondents had never been taught about menopause at school, but 83.6% felt that school was the best place for menopause education to begin.

In 2025, a study led by Public Health Wales explored menopause knowledge among the general population. Almost a third (31.1%) of the study's 1,020 respondents self-reported low knowledge of menopause, with younger age groups and males reporting the lowest knowledge.

Perimenopause and menopause education in schools

The Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland's national school curriculum, has eight curriculum areas. One of these areas is health and wellbeing, which includes relationships, sexual health and parenthood (RSHP) education.

The Scottish Government stated in its written response to the petition that age-appropriate education about menopause can already be delivered as part of RSHP education. However, the petitioner noted in response that this does not mean that menopause and perimenopause education is currently being consistently delivered in schools.

The Scottish Government's written response also highlighted a learning activity in the senior phase (S4 to S6) on human fertility and reproduction which includes learning on the menopause. Though the petitioner welcomed the news of this learning activity, she expressed that in her view, perimenopause and menopause education should begin from an earlier age, and should be available to all children.

The Scottish Government published renewed guidance in February 2026 to support delivery of RSHP education. The guidance notes that schools may consider using third sector providers to deliver elements of RSHP education. Some third sector organisations may offer menopause and perimenopause education. For instance, the social enterprise Bloody Amazing, a Scottish teacher-led initiative, designs and delivers workshops on periods and menopause in schools and community settings.

Approaches to the curriculum and the Curriculum Improvement Cycle

Very little of the curriculum that is taught in schools is prescribed. In the broad general education stage of the Curriculum for Excellence (from pre-school to the end of S3), the intention is that schools, departments and individual teachers have a great deal of autonomy to determine the content of the curriculum. There is a wide range of guidance to support schools and teachers in developing local curricula, but ultimately local decision-makers are expected to use their own professional judgement in developing curricula.

In Senior Phase (S4-S6) much of the learning is determined by the content of the qualifications pupils work towards; however, in other aspects of the learning, such as Personal and Social Education, there remains significant autonomy over what is taught at a local level.

Education Scotland is leading on the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC). The CIC is intended to be a 10-year cycle comprising four stages:

1. **Analysis** - reviewing how the curriculum is working at all levels.
2. **Engagement and co-creation** in developing new approaches.
3. **Share, Learn and Adopt** new approaches, including local capacity building and professional development; development of support material; monitoring of experiences of teachers and students.

4. **Mobilise, monitor and evaluate** - gain widespread support to the new approach and evaluate its impact.

The intention is that the fourth stage of the cycle will form part of the first stage of the following review cycle.

The CIC began in 2023-24. Education Scotland intends to replace the "technical framework" associated with CfE; the materials that are intended for teachers to use to plan the learning and curriculum in their classrooms will be renewed. These will take a "A Know–Do–Understand approach" and are intended to create greater clarity on what pupils should know, be able to do, and understand across the curriculum and at different stages.

Education Scotland published early draft samples of a range of documents in June 2026. These exemplified the types of materials and approaches that teachers and schools might expect under the Know-Do-Understand approach. Education Scotland also published a "draft resource for discussion" of 'Building Scotland's Curriculum' which will provide national practice guidance to support curriculum making in schools and other settings and replace a suite of previous guidance. These documents are not live and are intended to support further co-production.

The current timetable for implementation is:

- January 2027: Publish the final refreshed curriculum design guidance together with the Know-Do-Understand model for each of the eight Curriculum Areas from Early through to Fourth Level.
- Spring 2027: Publish a new digital tool for practitioners to access and explore the updated guidance and Know-Do-Understand model.
- August 2028: New suite of guidance expected to be adopted in schools.

Scottish Government actions

The Scottish Government's Women's Health Plan: Phase Two includes an action for the Scottish Government to "work with partners to review, update and promote the Women's Health content on RSHP.scot to help girls and young women better understand their health, and know where and how to access help and support." In its written response to the petition, the Scottish Government confirmed that this review will include adding content on perimenopause and menopause.

Key Organisations and relevant links

- Teaching Unions
- Education Scotland
- Scottish Government guidance on delivery of relationships, sexual health, and parenthood (RSHP) education

- Bloody Amazing – A Scottish teacher-led social enterprise that designs and delivers workshops on the menstrual cycle health and menopause in schools.

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Researchers
12 November 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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