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Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2287: Recognise Covid-19 vaccine injury and create appropriate NHS pathways, lodged by William Queen on behalf the Association for Vaccine Injury in Scotland.

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

This petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to recognise people injured by COVID-19 vaccinations. It calls for the establishment of NHS Scotland pathways for their assessment, diagnosis and treatment, including clinical guidance, specialist referral routes, data collection and public reporting.

This petition, PE2287, follows a Session 6 petition PE2086: Recognise the vaccine injured and offer appropriate treatment, which was closed at the end of the session. The SPICe briefing on petition PE2086 is available and this paper will consider developments since its publication in April 2024.

The Scottish Government made a number of both oral and written submissions to the Session 6 Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on PE2086. An initial response from the Scottish Government on this petition PE2287 has also been published.

COVID-19 vaccine injury

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) regulates medicines and medical devices in the UK. It is responsible for protecting and promoting public health and patient safety by ensuring that medicines and medical devices meet appropriate standards of safety, quality and efficacy. It operates the Yellow Card scheme which collects and monitors information on suspected safety concerns or incidents involving vaccines, medicines and medical devices.

In March 2023, the MHRA updated its summary of yellow card reporting on the Coronavirus vaccines, reporting:

> "As with any vaccine, COVID-19 vaccines will cause side effects in some people. The total number and the nature of the majority of Yellow Cards reports received so far is not unusual for a new vaccine for which members of the public and healthcare professionals are encouraged to report any suspected adverse reaction."

In recognition of potential vaccine harm, there is a UK-wide Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) this covers most of the commonly administered vaccinations. The COVID-19 vaccine was added to the scheme in December 2020.

NHS pathways for assessment, diagnosis and treatment

The Scottish Government, in its written submission, recognises that some individuals report experiencing serious health conditions following COVID-19 vaccination, but maintains:

> "In many cases it may be difficult for a clinician to determine if an illness or condition is directly linked to vaccination, however individuals experiencing health concerns following vaccination are able to access care through existing NHS Scotland services. Clinical assessment, diagnosis, treatment and referral decisions are made by healthcare professionals based on a patient's individual circumstances and clinical need. No decisions have been taken to introduce dedicated national pathways of the type proposed by the petition."

There are a wide range of potential side effects from the COVID-19 vaccinations. Alongside these known side effects the MHRA website provides information on all suspected adverse reactions that have been reported to the via the Yellow Card scheme for each of the COVID-19 vaccines.

In NHS Scotland there are four key types of networks which operate on a national level to work across professional and organisational boundaries to support Scottish Government policy aims. Strategic networks support the planning, finance and improvement of service change.

A Long-term Effects of COVID-19 Strategic Network was established in March 2022 with a £10 million support fund from Scottish Government over a three-year period. The network closed on 31 March 2026, and it is anticipated that further work will be taken forward as part of the Long-Term Conditions Strategy, expected in March 2027. In a submission on the earlier petition, the petitioner states: "The Scottish Government's approach to Long Covid and vaccine injuries shows a clear divide".

UK Covid-19 Inquiry

The UK Covid-19 Inquiry Module 4: Vaccines and therapeutics made a number of recommendations relevant to this petition.

Recommendation 4: Proportionate access to linked healthcare records for use in the assessment of safety signals.

Called for the UK Government and devolved administrations to work together, with their respective health delivery services, to facilitate and coordinate regulatory bodies' access to healthcare records in order to make the post-authorisation safety monitoring of new vaccines and therapeutics more efficient.

The Covid-19 Inquiry Module 4 report noted that the MHRA should be granted specific and proportionate access to comprehensive and comparable data from across the four nations of the UK, including linked primary and secondary healthcare data records, including data on vaccines and therapeutics administration. It calls for the improved linkage to be accompanied by strong safeguards for patient confidentiality, overseen by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Recommendation 5: Reform the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme.

Called for the UK Government to reform the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme, as soon as possible. Stating that the reform should include as a minimum:

- Increasing the £120,000 payment, at least in line with inflation to date.
- Subsequently applying annual increases in line with inflation.
- Introducing multiple levels of payment, commensurate with the degree of injury suffered.
- Any transitional arrangements necessary to provide for fairness between applicants to the existing scheme and applicants to the revised scheme.

Key Organisations and Relevant Links

- NHS Scotland
- Professor Daniel Prieto-Alhambra (Professor of Pharmacoepidemiology at the University of Oxford)
- UKCVFamily Covid Vaccine Injured and Bereaved
- UK COVID-19 Inquiry
- SPICe blog: Long-term conditions in Scotland
- SPICe blog: Long COVID: Update October 2024

Lizzy Burgess
Senior Researcher Health and Social Care
19 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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