

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 7 May 2025  
8th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

## PE2101: Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Peter Earl on behalf of Troqueer Primary School

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide Primary and Secondary Schools with Automated External Defibrillators (AED).

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2101>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 25 September 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health and Rodger Hill which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 4 June 2024](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 576 signatures have been received on this petition.
8. The Committee is also considering petition [PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces](#).

### Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**May 2025**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petition**

### **PE2101: Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland**

#### **Petitioner**

Peter Earl on behalf of Troqueer Primary School

#### **Date Lodged**

21 May 2024

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide Primary and Secondary Schools with Automated External Defibrillators (AED).

#### **Background information**

After a trip to our local Operation Safety event, we looked into the availability of defibrillators in our local area. We were shocked to find out how under resourced our local area was. We do have a local defibrillator but we discovered it was too far away to have a positive impact on anybody who might suffer a cardiac arrest at our school. During events, busy periods we could have up to 400 - 500 people on site. It is not safe enough to not have an AED at hand.

We decided to raise money to buy an AED ourselves. We have learned a lot about enterprise, AEDs, the circulatory system, and how important these devices are.

Our schools are worryingly under resourced compared to other parts of the UK. Providing defibrillators in schools will also help local communities and should be considered as a matter of urgency. The lives of pupils and staff members are being put at risk.

Please help us to get them provided in ALL schools.

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2101, on 25 September 2025**

**The Convener:** PE2101, which has been lodged by Peter Earl on behalf of Troqueer primary school, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide primary and secondary schools with automated external defibrillators—AEDs. The petition explains that Troqueer primary school pupils discovered that their local defibrillator is, in fact, too far away to have a positive impact if someone were to suffer cardiac arrest at the school.

The SPICe briefing notes that, in January of this year, data that was obtained through freedom of information requests submitted by the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party showed that approximately four in 10 Scottish schools do not currently have a defibrillator. It is thought that that figure could be an underestimate, because six of Scotland's 32 local authorities did not respond to the freedom of information requests.

The UK Government provided AEDs to state schools in England that did not already have one on site to ensure that all state schools had a defibrillator by the end of the 2022-23 academic year.

The committee has received a response to the petition from the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, which highlights the existence of "Scotland's Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021-2026" and points out that one of the strategy's aims is to increase the percentage of OHCA cases in which a defibrillator is deployed before the arrival of the Ambulance Service to 20 per cent. The response also points out that decisions on the installation and maintenance of defibrillators in schools are matters for local authorities to consider at local level.

Members will know that our colleague Finlay Carson has expressed an interest in the petition. Although he is unable to join us today, he has submitted a written submission.

The provision of defibrillators is an issue that we have come round to before. It seems something of a no-brainer that defibrillators should be in place in schools. Other parts of the country have already moved to ensure that that is the case. The response that we have received is a bit lacking, I think, in that nobody appears to be taking a lead. It is all just being farmed around. Do colleagues have similar thoughts? Does anyone have any suggestions on how we might proceed?

**David Torrance:** I will break with tradition here: I think that the issue is one that the committee could take forward. It is a very important issue. Defibrillators save lives. I am surprised that not every school in Scotland has them. Therefore, I suggest that the committee considers writing to the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health to highlight the UK Government's provision of defibrillators to all schools in England and to ask whether the Scottish Government will provide direct funding for primary and secondary schools to purchase and install defibrillators.

**The Convener:** It seems invidious that Scottish schools are now behind the standard that is being set elsewhere around the UK and that four in 10 schools—the figure might be slightly higher—would not, in the event that an emergency occurred,

have access to life-saving equipment that has a proven track record. I have seen such equipment being deployed, and I know that other colleagues have heard of instances of its deployment in which lives have been saved as a result.

Are colleagues content to support Mr Torrance's recommendation?

**Members *indicated agreement.***

**The Convener:** We will keep the petition open, and we will seek to pursue the objective of securing a defibrillator for every school in Scotland.

## Annexe C: Written submissions

### Minister for Public Health and Women's Health written submission, 8 October 2024

#### PE2101/C: Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 2024, in which you ask whether the Scottish Government will provide direct funding for primary and secondary schools to purchase and install defibrillators, following consideration of Petition 2101, *Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland*, by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee.

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering the aim included in the [Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021 to 2026](#) to increase the percentage of out of hospital cardiac arrests which have a defibrillator applied before the arrival of the ambulance service to 20%. Rather than funding the purchase of defibrillators directly, we work to deliver this aim by participating in the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership to support partners to ensure defibrillators are placed strategically and to co-create local solutions to improve rates of survival.

Local authorities make decisions on purchasing, installing and maintaining defibrillators for the schools in their area. As you are aware, local authorities are funded through the annual block grant settlement from the Scottish Government and they should use funding resources allocated to them in the manner which they believe will best meet local needs and circumstances.

We work as part of the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership to ensure that when local authorities or other organisations purchase defibrillators, they have access to the information they need to ensure they are installed in the place they will have the most impact. International evidence shows that in many countries defibrillators are not placed strategically, resulting in too many devices being placed in areas of lower risk.

The Scottish Government and St John Scotland have funded the Resuscitation Research Group to develop a tool, PADmap, to support organisations and communities with evidence on the best location to place their defibrillator to maximise its impact. PADmap is in the final stages of development and will be free for anyone in Scotland to use.

As well as supporting people to install their defibrillators in the most effective location, the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership also works with local authorities to co-create other local solutions to improve out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival.

Prompt defibrillation is just one important factor in increasing a person's chances of survival from cardiac arrest; other aspects including prompt bystander CPR are also vital. Save a Life for Scotland's work in this area includes increasing the provision of CPR and defibrillator awareness training, and encouraging the use of [GoodSAM](#), an app to crowdsource volunteer responders to help in instances of out of hospital cardiac arrest.

The solutions to improving survival from cardiac arrest may differ in each area and the Save a Life for Scotland Partnership takes a data-driven approach to working with local authorities to understand the chain of survival in their areas and how to improve it.

I hope this further information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,  
**Jenni Minto MSP**

## **Rodger Hill written submission, 1 May 2025**

### **PE2101/D: Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland**

I am writing in support of this petition, having previously visited the pupils at Troqueer Primary, with Finlay Carson MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries.

Our son, David Hill, died of a cardiac arrest, without warning on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022 on a rugby pitch. Following his cardiac arrest, David received CPR and was treated with an onsite defibrillator to no avail. Sadly, David's case is not unique and there are on average 3,140 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests each year in Scotland, with a 30-day survival rate of only 9.7%<sup>1</sup>. It is estimated that every minute of delay in bystander action reduces the likelihood of survival after an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest OHCA by 10%.

In order to improve health outcomes and survival statistics, the Scottish Government published the Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021-2026<sup>2</sup>, with specific aims and outcomes.

While we can't change what happened to David, we can work to improve outcomes for other young people. My wife Lesley (David's step-mother) and I established the DH9 Foundation, a charity in memory of David, which has the explicit goal of improving the cardiac health of young people under the age of 35. Since we established the DH9 Foundation in late 2024, we have facilitated the installation of 42 defibrillators in Dumfries & Galloway schools and local community organisations, provided free CPR and defibrillator training across our region and continued to fund free cardiac screenings for young people through the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY). DH9 Foundation is also working closely with SaveALife For Scotland (SALFS) and Dumfries & Galloway Council as part of the rollout of a CARE Zone (Cardiac Arrest Rescue Zone) collaborative.

Whilst this is positive progress in Dumfries and Galloway, it is merely a drop in the ocean as far as what is needed across Scotland. I am of the view that CPR and defibrillator training should be a compulsory element in every child's education, in line with the previous commitment of the Scottish Government. Schools are the beating hearts of our communities. It is also my view that every school in Scotland,

---

<sup>1</sup> Scotland's Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Report 2019-2022  
<https://www.scottishambulance.com/media/tugb2r1r/cardiareportv5.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest: Strategy 2021 to 2026  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-out-hospital-cardiac-arrest-strategy-2021-2026/>

which for 195 days per year operate as significant population centres, should have a defibrillator onsite and available, to the school population and the local community.

In response to this petition, the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health stated that “decisions on the installation and maintenance of defibrillators in schools is a matter for Local Authorities to consider at the local level”. Subsequent responses from Ms Minto to this Committee on this matter have repeated this view. I feel that this argument is flawed.

Indeed, the Committee on 25 September 2024 agreed to write to the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health to highlight the UK Government's provision of defibrillators to all schools in England and to ask whether the Scottish Government will provide direct funding for primary and secondary schools to purchase and install defibrillators.

I recently asked all Scottish local authorities, by FOI, for details of which of their schools had defibrillators and if they did, whether they were available to the public to use if required. The returns show that out of 2446 schools, only 893 have AEDs onsite (of which 711 are available to the public).

A few local authorities have equipped all their schools with a defibrillator. More usually, schools fundraise to buy their own defibrillator. However, this approach is very inequitable. People from more deprived areas in Scotland are almost twice as likely to have an OHCA and are 60% less likely to survive to leave hospital than those from less deprived areas. Around 11% of the population of Scotland live in a rural area and are 32% less likely to survive to leave hospital after OHCA than those living in urban areas. Placing a public access defibrillator on every school in Scotland would go a long way to achieving the OHCA Strategy outcomes. Combining this approach with a mandatory requirement that every child in Scotland's schools receives CPR and defibrillator training biennially, could significantly improve health outcomes across the country.

I am keenly aware of the many competing demands on the Scottish Government's budget. Essentially, I believe that two actions from the Scottish Government could make significant improvements in health outcomes from OHCA's:

- A renewed commitment, working with COSLA and ADES, that CPR will be taught to every child in Scotland's schools biennially. In doing so we will vastly increase the number of CPR ready citizens and make our nation, one where a confident, active bystander is the first response to an OHCA, buying arrestees critical time.
- The provision of grant funding in the region of £2Million to local authorities to place a public access defibrillator on every school that does not have one. The aim would be that a defibrillator was sited only 2 minutes away from Scotland's 700,000 school children and 75,000 school staff, which would also be available to the local community. The installation and long-term maintenance would be the responsibility of individual local authorities.

Agreement to these two actions would show a clear commitment of the Scottish Government to improving health outcomes for the whole of Scotland's population and would be a significant and fitting legacy to David. These actions would align

Scotland with England<sup>3</sup>, Wales<sup>4</sup> and Northern Ireland<sup>5</sup>, where all publicly funded schools have access to funding for defibrillators.

I believe that such measures will have broad cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament, as demonstrated by the recommendation of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee and from my discussions with elected representatives.

---

<sup>3</sup> Defibrillators: All state schools now have lifesaving equipment  
<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/07/defibrillators-all-state-schools-now-have-lifesaving-equipment/>

<sup>4</sup> New funding to increase defibrillator access in Wales  
<https://www.gov.wales/new-funding-increase-defibrillator-access-wales>

<sup>5</sup> A Life-Saving Investment: Defibrillators to be provided to all schools in Northern Ireland.  
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/life-saving-investment-defibrillators-be-provided-all-schools-northern-ireland>