

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 12 November 2025
17th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2074: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

Introduction

Petitioner Iona Stoddart

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the funding it provides to local councils, enabling them to deliver the best possible health and social care, and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2074>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 19 March 2025.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to COSLA and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government.
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 COSLA and the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing, 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 13 February 2024.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 174 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

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

Clerks to the Committee
November 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2074: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

Petitioner

Iona Stoddart

Date Lodged

18 December 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the funding it provides to local councils, enabling them to deliver the best possible health and social care, and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

Previous action

Have contacted Humza Yousaf MSP, Shona Robison MSP, Michael Matheson MSP, Anas Sarwar MSP, and South Lanarkshire Council Chief Executive regarding the proposed closure of McClymont House in Lanark.

A similar petition, related to the proposed closure of McClymont House, has have been handed into South Lanarkshire Council's public petitions committee.

Background information

Due to government cuts and the current cost of living crisis, councils are being forced to make drastic cuts in their health and social care budgets.

Unused COVID-19 funds were clawed back from local authorities; we suggest the return of these funds would alleviate the considerable financial burdens facing councils, helping prevent care home closures. Current research suggests one care home in Scotland is closing every week!

South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) have a £38million budget deficit for year 23/24. To save money, they have proposed closing two care homes in Lanarkshire.

After being advised that the Integration Joint Board (IJB) would be holding a vote on whether to close McClymont House, family members lobbied the four voting councillors about our concerns as this is the only remaining council run care home in the vicinity. They voted against the proposal, resulting in a split vote, a first for any Scottish IJB. New admissions have been halted and a consultation process is underway.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2074 on 19 March 2025

The Convener: PE2074, which was lodged by Iona Stoddart, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the funding that it provides to local councils to enable them to deliver the best possible health and social care and help to protect the vulnerable, frail and elderly population from the closure of residential and nursing care homes.

We previously considered the petition at our meeting on 1 May 2024, when we agreed to write to the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning. We have received a response from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, in which she argues that the spring budget and autumn statement of the previous UK Government

“failed to deliver the funding Scotland needs for public services.”

She goes on to state that, despite financial challenges,

“the Scottish Government have increased the Local Government Settlement to over £14 billion in 2024-25”,

and members will be aware that that figure has increased to more than £15 billion as part of the recently approved 2025-26 budget.

The response goes on to note the commitment of local and national Government to respect

“each other’s democratic mandates as part of the Verity House agreement”,

highlighting that

“it is up to each democratically elected council how it manages its day-to-day business and decision making processes.”

Do colleagues have any thoughts on where we go next with this petition?

Foyso Choudhury: I think that we should write to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and seek its view on the petition, because I feel that the Scottish Government is washing its hands of this, and we need some guidance from COSLA to see whether there is something that can be done.

The Convener: So what would you like us to ask COSLA?

Foyso Choudhury: We could write to COSLA to seek its view on the petition and whether it believes that the actions taken by the Scottish Government are enough.

The Convener: I see—okay. Are colleagues similarly minded?

Fergus Ewing: On the face of it, this is a matter for local authorities, but on the other hand, when the petition was considered before, I think that it was your good self,

convener, who suggested that we write to the Minister for Local Government, Empowerment and Planning to seek his reflections on the UK-wide survey by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers that found that 44 per cent of council chief executives and senior managers had identified adult social care as a service at risk of cuts due to very large gaps in local government budgets. I am not prepared to sweep the issues under the carpet until we have heard from the minister.

We have heard subsequently from the cabinet secretary, but the reply, which I am looking at, does not seem to me to answer the specific question that you raised. I am not quite sure whether that is the case, as it is quite a long reply, and I have just reread it briefly. However, if I am correct, the question remains unanswered and we should at least pursue it, as well as writing to COSLA, which could no doubt be asked to comment on that particular survey, too.

You could say that all local services are subject to the risk of cuts, and that, therefore, 44 per cent might not be a particularly remarkable statistic. However, it is nearly half, and we all know that this is a pretty serious issue when it comes to care for the elderly population. It is going to become an even more serious and more difficult issue in years to come as the proportion of elderly people and the number of people requiring care increase.

The Convener: We have had a couple of suggestions from Mr Choudhury and Mr Ewing. Are we content to keep the petition open and seek further clarification on the basis of what they have suggested?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submissions

COSLA written submission, 14 July 2025

PE2074/C: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

As you will know, COSLA is a Councillor-led, cross-party organisation, representing all 32 Councils in Scotland, which champions Councils' vital work to secure the resources and powers they need to build better and more equal local communities. While this response is laid out from an officer perspective, it is within this governance context that I provide our views on the petition and the related actions taken by the Scottish Government.

You may be aware that Local Government funds independent and voluntary sector care homes through the National Care Home Contract rate, which is the publicly funded rate paid for older adults requiring a care home placement and who are funded by the local authority. The National Care Home Contract fee is underpinned by a Cost Model which was jointly developed and agreed between COSLA, Scotland Excel, and Scottish Care. The Cost Model aims to provide a transparent and robust method of calculating the average cost of care per week, per resident, based on agreed benchmark indicators (including inflation, wage costs, building costs, profit levels). The fee continues to be discussed and negotiated annually with sector representatives. As pressures and costs have increased for the sector and Local Government – and as Councils continue to face significant funding constraints – these negotiations have become particularly challenging, with sector representative no longer feeling the National Care Home Contract addresses the true cost of care. This is despite a near doubling of the weekly rate for residential and nursing placements since 2007.

It will come as no surprise to committee members that Local Government is facing significant funding gaps across all services. Audit Scotland recently reported¹ that integration authorities projected a funding gap of £357m in 2023/24 which was set to worsen – we know from budget assumptions made for 2025/26 this has unfortunately been the case. In addition, Audit Scotland have also recently reported² on Council Budgets more broadly for 2025/26 at which time Councils were projecting a £657m funding gap over 25/26 and 26/27.

This challenging financial context comes as health and social care services are experiencing pressures that while not unique are very pronounced – growing demand coupled with workforce pressures, increasing complexity of care needs, and public expectations have contributed to a challenging context. Our member Councils have increased real terms spend on social care by 29% since 2010/11 at the expense of other preventative, non-statutory services, recognising the need for sustained and increased investment to meet these challenges. However, rising operational costs, increasing demand for services, and other cost pressures such as

¹ https://audit.scot/uploads/2024-07/nr_240725_ijb_performance_analysis.pdf

² https://audit.scot/uploads/2025-05/briefing_250522_council_budgets.pdf

inflation mean that the need for greater funding to support sustainability of social care is more urgent than ever.

Each integration authority is taking its own approach to identifying cost savings. These will range from having to take very difficult decisions on the amount of care that can be purchased, the levels of support that can be provided and looking at how the resources that are available can be prioritised. The current financial situation also has a significant impact on the ability of local and integration authorities to invest in early intervention and prevention.

All of the cost saving measures being taken have an impact on the ability to deliver for, and help protect, the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes. Further, the increased expenditure on social care comes at the cost of investing in preventative approaches to wellbeing – upstream interventions and supports that could help reduce the need for people to move into care homes in the first place. These are not decisions taken lightly but rather out of necessity given the significant funding constraints facing local and integration authorities.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government points out in her correspondence with the Committee on this petition, dated 29 May 2024, it is the responsibility of individual local authorities to manage their own budgets and to allocate the total financial resources available to them, including on health and social care services, on the basis of local needs and priorities. It is therefore important to acknowledge that IJB budgets – which are integrated budgets comprising of contributions from each partner, the relevant Council(s) and Health Board(s) – are subject to the same savings as all other areas for which councils have responsibility. Wherever possible, social care services are being protected and prioritised within Budgets, in line with Local Government’s statutory duties.

COSLA will continue to press the importance of urgent additional funding from Scottish Government to invest in social care and social work services, to enable Local Government to commission and deliver more care services, and to ensure those services we operate and commission are sustainable now and into the future.

As referenced within your letter to COSLA, we are aware of the results of the UK-wide survey conducted by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, which found that 44% of Council chief executives and senior managers identified adult social care as a service at risk of cuts due to budget pressures. Given the significant fiscal challenges being faced across councils and IJBs, it will come as no surprise that difficult decisions have had to have been made to prioritise statutory service delivery. Despite this, we will continue to work with the Scottish Government to advocate for fair and flexible funding to ensure continuation of these services which contribute towards a whole-system approach through prevention, thus leading to financial savings across the sector, and better outcomes for citizens and communities.

Health and Social Care Team, COSLA

Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing written submission, 25 August 2025

PE2074/D: Increase local government funding to help protect the vulnerable elderly population and prevent the closure of care homes

Thank you for your request of 21 March 2025 to Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, and I apologise for the delay in replying. I am responding as the Minister with the portfolio responsibility for social care.

I note you are writing to specifically seek reflections on the UK-wide survey by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, which found that 44% of council chief executives and senior managers identified adult social care as a service at risk of cuts due to large or very large gaps in local government budgets.

As highlighted within earlier responses to the Committee, the Scottish Government's policy towards local authorities' spending is to allow local authorities the financial freedom to operate independently. As such, the vast majority of funding is provided by means of a block grant. It is then the responsibility of individual local authorities to manage their own budgets and to allocate the total financial resources available to them, including on social care, on the basis of local needs and priorities, having first fulfilled their statutory obligations and the jointly agreed set of national and local priorities.

The 2025-26 Budget provided Local Government in Scotland with record funding of over £15.1 billion through this block grant, one of the largest increases in funding in recent times and a real terms increase of 5.5 per cent.

The Scottish Government will continue to work with Local Government on how we operate and collaborate on reforming public services to ensure sustainable people centred services. We are also committed to engaging constructively with the UK Government to highlight the importance of sustainable public services to ensure the people of Scotland continue to receive the high quality public services that they expect and deserve.

On provision for social care, while the Scottish Government has overall responsibility for health and social care support policy in Scotland, the statutory responsibility for delivering, commissioning, providing appropriate social care capacity and charging for services at a local level lies with local authorities, NHS boards and integrated Health and Social Care Partnerships.

We do not want to see the closure of good quality care homes and we understand the concern this causes for residents and their families, as well as for the wider communities for any affected care home. However, it is for local authorities to assess local population needs and where investment needs to be targeted to improve the social care infrastructure within their relevant area.

The Scottish Government remains committed to developing a sustainable health and social care system that ensures people get the right care, at the right time, in the right place. In support of this, the 2025-26 Budget provides record funding of £21.7

billion for Health and Social Care - an uplift exceeding consequentials and taking funding to an all-time high.

The Budget provides almost £2.2 billion investment for social care and integration – delivering on our Programme for Government commitment to increase social care spending by 25% over this Parliament, two years ahead of our original target. This includes an additional £125 million to support delivery of the pay uplift to a minimum of £12.60 per hour for adult social care workers in 2025-26.

Despite these substantial funding increases, significant challenge for service provision remains. Prevention, early intervention and reform remain critical to delivering an effective, efficient and sustainable health and social care system. This is reflected in the recently published Service Renewal Framework (SRF), which provides a blueprint for health and social care service reform in Scotland.

It outlines what we want the future of services to look like and deliver, supported by six key areas of work: disease prevention and early detection, value based and people-led health and care, strengthened integration, improved access to services, the redesign of hospitals, services accessible through digital technologies, all underpinned by a person-centred approach. This Framework will be implemented jointly with COSLA.

In relation to the impact of fiscal pressures, including the recent UK Government increase in employer National Insurance Contributions (eNICs), we are undertaking a programme of work to understand the current financial viability picture in the social care sector. This has included engaging with local leaders through the Collaborative Response and Assurance Group (CRAG), as well as Ministerial roundtables with partners. Ministers and SG officials have also been working closely with Integrated Joint Board Chief Financial Officers and COSLA to gain a more granular understanding of the issues and consider how the pressure can be managed.

A Financial Viability Response Group is in place to further explore the risks and potential mitigations for the sector. This group have developed a detailed risk register and have identified potential actions, many of these being an extension of actions already in put in place locally by a number of Health and Social Care Partnerships and among some social care providers. We are continuing to work with delivery partners and providers to identify and consider the steps that can be taken together to mitigate the impact of the increase in eNICs and to protect services for the people of Scotland.

I hope this information is useful for the Committee.

Yours sincerely

TOM ARTHUR