

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 26 November 2025
18th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2183: Make Suicide Awareness and Prevention training mandatory for high school students

Introduction

Petitioner Craig Paton

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make Suicide Awareness and Prevention training mandatory for high school students. This training is available in the English schools and I feel we should be following suit to help the next generation of young Scots. This training would help to remove stigmas and empower our young people to speak up openly. It will also ensure our teachers can spot the vital signs and can take appropriate measures to prevent a fatality.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2183>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 10 September 2025.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 969 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received a submission from the Scottish Government, which is set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

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

Clerks to the Committee
November 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2183: Make Suicide Awareness and Prevention training mandatory for high school students

Petitioner

Craig Paton

Date Lodged

10 September 2025

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make Suicide Awareness and Prevention training mandatory for high school students. This training is available in the English schools and I feel we should be following suit to help the next generation of young Scots. This training would help to remove stigmas and empower our young people to speak up openly. It will also ensure our teachers can spot the vital signs and can take appropriate measures to prevent a fatality.

Background information

Suicide is the biggest killer of people under 35 in the UK. Rates among young people, especially ages 15–24, have risen in recent years. Young people often feel isolated, misunderstood, or ashamed of their emotions. Talking openly about suicide breaks stigma and encourages help-seeking.

Most suicidal crises are short-lived and can be interrupted with timely support. Recognising warning signs — like withdrawal, hopelessness, or reckless behaviour — allows peers, teachers, and families to act before it's too late. It teaches young people how to talk about their feelings, support friends, and seek help.

Awareness campaigns show that it's okay to not be okay — and that support exists. Awareness helps us intervene early and prevent these tragedies. I feel this training is vital as schools, families, and workplaces all play a role in suicide prevention. Awareness equips young adults to have life-saving conversations and create safe environments.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on PE2183

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petition is highlighting the issue of suicide among young people in Scotland.

Curriculum content

Health and Wellbeing is a key area of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and is one of the three curriculum areas considered to be the responsibility of all practitioners (the other two are literacy and numeracy). The current technical framework of the curriculum provides “experiences and outcomes” and “benchmarks” across the curriculum from early years up to the end of Broad General Education (BGE) – normally at the end of S3.

There are six areas of the health and wellbeing curriculum:

- Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing
- Planning for Choices and Changes
- Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport
- Food and Health
- Substance Misuse
- Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP).

The curriculum in Scotland is largely non-statutory. The content of what is taught in schools, particularly in BGE, is largely a matter for teachers, schools or local authorities. Nevertheless, the Government and its national agencies can and do influence curriculum content in schools. For example, through guidance or working groups on specific issues.

The Scottish Government published a [Mental health and wellbeing: Whole School Approach framework](#) in 2021. This explains that a whole school approach aims to support everyone’s mental health by creating a positive, inclusive environment. The intention is that this approach combines preventative and universal support for the school community with more focused help for those who need it. It aims to reduce stigma, encourage early intervention and promote wellbeing across the school community. The framework includes “Prevention of suicide and self-harm” as a possible staff development opportunity. The framework says that pupils should be involved in co-designing the content and delivery of the health and wellbeing curriculum. It also says:

“Curricular approaches which focus on promoting resilience can be adapted to reflect the current, local context and ensure their relevance to children and young people. Learning and teaching should also take account of prior knowledge and understanding as well as respond to and act upon what the children and young people want to learn about. As well as building resilience

there should be opportunities for children and young people to develop mental, emotional, social and physical skills, problem-solving, coping, and relationship management skills. Enabling children and young people to learn that there are a range of strategies available to enhance mental health and wellbeing.”

The framework was developed by the Scottish Government’s [Mental Health in Schools Working Group](#). [The remit of this group includes](#) to “seek to understand the use and impact of the mental health support we are providing through education settings (including supporting considerations around suicide prevention in education), identifying and addressing barriers and gaps where appropriate”. The minutes of this group include references to suicide prevention work, including for the [meeting in June 2025](#) where COSLA presented a discussion paper on suicide prevention in education.

The Scottish Government also provides annual funding to local authorities to support access to counsellors in every secondary school.

Education Scotland is currently undertaking work on the [Curriculum Improvement Cycle](#) (CIC). The CIC is intended to take around 10 years with the current cycle running to 2033-34, and at that time, the next cycle will begin. The CIC will reexamine CfE’s current technical framework and may change how knowledge is articulated within the curriculum. This process reflected recommendations of the [OECD’s report of the review of CfE published in 2021](#). The OECD observed that the policy environment in Scotland had “resulted in a reactive and oftentimes political approach, which is not the most efficient way to address issues with CfE.”

Suicide Prevention Scotland

The Scottish Government has maintained a continuous focus on reducing suicide since at least 2002, [publishing a series of strategies, prevention and delivery plans every few years](#). The current strategy is ‘Creating Hope Together’, running from 2022 to 2032. The [current delivery plan was published in August 2025](#) and covers the next three years. Policy actions for children and young people are intended to ‘build new networks of support easily accessible from schools’. An [Advisory Group on Healthy Body Image for Children and Young People](#) was set up in 2019 to look at ways of improving support for young people and advice for professionals. They [published a report in 2020](#).

The [current delivery plan is built around four outcomes](#). Outcome 2 covers suicide prevention in a ‘whole school approach to mental health and school curriculum’ and details a number of intended or ongoing actions.

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

CAMHS services are organised and run by the fourteen territorial NHS health boards. Specialist services are provided for children and young people aged up to 18 years. Teams of staff comprise Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Community Mental

Health Nurses, Clinical Associates in Applied Psychology and Health Care Support Workers.

Referrals are made by GPs, school nurses, health visitors, social workers, educational psychologists, via paediatric hospital units, occupational and speech and language therapists and the Crisis team.

[Referral criteria for CAMHS](#) are decided nationally and were defined in 2009 (updated 2024):

Condition 1: basic threshold

- A child/young person has or is suspected to have a mental disorder or other condition that results in persistent symptoms of psychological distress.

Condition 2: complexity and severity threshold There is also the existence of at least one of the following.

- An associated serious and persistent impairment of their day-to-day social functioning.
- An associated risk that the child/young person may cause serious harm to themselves or others
- An associated significantly unfavourable social context (e.g. a child in care, a sibling, a parent or carer with significant mental or physical health problems, a child who has been the victim of abuse or who has experienced domestic abuse). Where this is observed, a multidisciplinary approach should be taken ensuring appropriate inclusion of relevant agencies.

CAMHS are regarded as the top tier of support available, when other available support, such as through school or community interventions, has not been successful.

Data on Probable Suicides

The [National Records of Scotland publishes statistics annually on probable suicides](#). [SPICe published a blog on suicide deaths in Scotland](#) (2024).

Ned Sharratt and Anne Jepson

Senior Researchers

22/10/2025

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

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware

however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government written submission, 1 October 2025

PE2183/A: Make Suicide Awareness and Prevention training mandatory for high school students

Thank you for your email of 10 September 2025 on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee seeking the Scottish Government's views on the petition submitted by Craig Paton. The Scottish Government is grateful to the petitioner for raising an issue that is of great importance to the young people of Scotland.

It may help if I set out the basis of Scotland's current curriculum framework, the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). CfE is a broad, national framework and is not a statutory curriculum prescribed to the level of individual courses that must be followed by each school. Health and Wellbeing (HWB) is one of the eight curricular areas within CfE and is fundamental to children and young people's learning. Its importance is reflected in its central position in the curriculum, its prominence in the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and its role within the National Improvement Framework for Education. Alongside literacy and numeracy, HWB is one of the three core areas identified as a Responsibility of All, meaning all staff across the school community share responsibility for its delivery. The HWB curriculum is designed to ensure learners develop the knowledge, skills, capabilities, and attributes they need for their mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing, both now and in the future.

An overview of the HWB Curriculum is noted below:

- Primary education: delivered through six organisers – mental, emotional, social and physical (MESP) wellbeing, planning for choices and changes, food and health, physical education, physical activity and sport, substance misuse, and relationships, sexual health, and parenthood (RSHP).
- Secondary education: delivered through Physical Education (PE), Home Economics (HE), and Personal and Social Education (PSE).
- Senior phase: vocational and academic pathways in HWB support further study or employment in health, care, sport, and wellbeing sectors.

Resources to support learning in mental health, self-harm, and suicide prevention are available from Education Scotland, including professional learning and links to NHS Inform. Schools are encouraged to consult with children and young people to ensure learning meets their needs, and to integrate support for positive mental wellbeing across the curriculum. These resources were published in 2022 and updated in 2023, however they remain current.

[Safeguarding: Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

There are also resources on positive mental wellbeing, which provide a comprehensive package of information including information on support organisations, to support primary and secondary school staff to support positive mental wellbeing. These resources were published in 2020 and updated in 2024.

[Positive mental wellbeing - resources to support children and young people | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

Education Scotland is leading on development and delivery of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC). This represents a planned and systematic approach to strengthening the curriculum to ensure it remains forward looking, and supports more consistent teaching and learning experiences and improved attainment and achievement of our children and young people. The CIC, which covers all curricular areas including Health and Wellbeing (HWB), is considering all curricular areas and key aspects – including the subject area of HWB, where work is already underway, drawing on robust interrogation of evidence and a co-design process with practitioners and wider stakeholders of the curriculum. The CIC aims to ensure HWB remains a key part of Scottish education for children and young people, responsive to both local and global priorities. The Cycle will consider curriculum content, the role of knowledge, transitions across early years, primary and secondary, and strong progression between Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Phase. Work to update all eight curricular areas under Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), including Health and Wellbeing, began in academic year 2024/2025. Further information and updates on progress can be found on the Education Scotland's Curriculum Improvement Cycle webpage - [Curriculum Improvement Cycle – Education Scotland](#).

I hope the information contained in this letter is helpful to the Committee in their consideration of this petition.

Learning Directorate, Curriculum and Qualifications Division