

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 14 January 2026  
1st Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

## PE2053: Stop the cuts to community link workers and help secure their long-term future within GP practice teams

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Peter Cawston on behalf of Scottish GPs at the Deep End

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to ensure that the number and hours of current community link workers serving the poorest communities are not cut in the next financial year; and take binding steps to secure long-term funding for community link workers in GP practices across Scotland.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2053>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 30 October 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish 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 a new written submission from the Scottish Government, which is 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 29 November 2023.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 2,581 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**  
**January 2026**

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

### **PE2053: Stop the cuts to community link workers and help secure their long-term future within GP practice teams**

#### **Petitioner**

Peter Cawston on behalf of Scottish GPs at the Deep End

#### **Date Lodged**

9 October 2023

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to ensure that the number and hours of current community link workers serving the poorest communities are not cut in the next financial year; and take binding steps to secure long-term funding for community link workers in GP practices across Scotland.

#### **Previous action**

GPs at the Deep End have made representations to Scottish Government ministers and officials.

We have also written to Glasgow City Integrated Joint Board members and councillors about the situation facing community link workers in Glasgow, as well as writing to MSPs representing the areas in which impacted practices are based.

#### **Background information**

Community link workers (CLWs) are based in GP surgeries across Scotland. They offer patients help with housing, benefits, debt, food insecurity, fuel poverty, physical inactivity, loneliness, abuse and much more when these impact on their health. They also listen to people about what they need to be well, and support them to achieve this. This allows doctors and healthcare staff to focus more of their time on diagnosing and treating medical conditions.

Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) plan to cut the number of CLWs by at least one third from April 2024. Across Scotland, the funding for community link workers is short term, insecure and unstable, meaning this is not a local budgetary decision, but one rooted in national funding arrangements.

The gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest in Scotland has never been wider. We believe cuts in CLW numbers during a cost-of-living crisis will only widen these health inequalities.

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2053 on 30 October 2024**

**The Convener:** Our last continued petition, PE2053, which was lodged by Peter Cawston on behalf of Scottish general practitioners at the deep end, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to ensure that the number and hours of current community link workers serving the poorest communities are not cut in the next financial year and to take binding steps to secure long-term funding for community link workers in GP practices across Scotland.

The committee last considered the petition on 24 January. We have received responses from the Scottish Government, Glasgow city health and social care partnership, Health and Social Care Scotland, the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, GMB Scotland, GPs working with community link workers and our MSP colleague Paul Sweeney. The responses, which are detailed in today's committee papers, highlight the valuable role that community link workers play. Many MSPs receive submissions in that regard.

However, I draw members' attention to the submission from the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland, which comments that the dispute that prompted the petition centres not on the value of community link workers but on who should fund them—the Scottish Government or local health and social care partnerships. A number of submissions indicated a preference for CLW funding to be included in baseline budgets from the Scottish Government, to ensure greater certainty of funding for these roles.

The Scottish Government has told us that a new national community link worker advisory group has been set up and will formulate detailed proposals for changes in relation to specific features of GP CLW services that are to be reviewed.

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

**David Torrance:** The committee could write to the Scottish Government to seek an update on the work of the national community link worker advisory group, specifically on what consideration has been given to introducing baseline funding that would provide secure, long-term funding for CLW roles.

**The Convener:** Are colleagues content to proceed on that basis?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## **Annexe C: Written submission**

### **Scottish Government written submission, 6 December 2024**

#### **PE2053/K: Stop the cuts to community link workers and help secure their long-term future within GP practice teams**

Thank you for your email of 08<sup>th</sup> November 2024 on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in relation to PE2053, regarding an update on the work of the National Community Link Worker Advisory Group, and, specifically, what consideration the Group has given to introducing baseline funding for CLW services.

#### **Background on the National Community Link Worker Advisory Group**

Community Link Workers (CLWs) are at the forefront of our efforts to address health inequalities, and we will make every effort to support the continued sustainability of that role. As noted in our letter to the Committee on 29 November 2023, most CLW services in primary care multidisciplinary teams across Scotland are funded from the annual Scottish Government's Primary Care Improvement Fund (PCIF) (£190m plus uplifts in 2024/25), which supports integration authorities to deliver six services (one of which is CLWs) that help to deliver the 2018 GP contract. It is for integration authorities to decide how they use their PCIF allocation to deliver the six services in line with local priorities.

Officials have begun a review of general practice CLW policy which is overseen by the CLW Advisory Group. The aims of the review are to create:

- Greater consistency in local data collection with new national reporting and proposals that will provide a basis for longer-term data and evidence improvements.
- A refreshed national approach to CLWs which realigns policy and resources to greatest need, including the development of options for how we might administer national funding for CLWs in future with the aim of improving stability and sustainability. Timing of this work will align with a process to baseline the PCIF described below.
- A national model for General Practice CLWs which sets consistent minimum expectations for the role, local policy and services, which can be adapted to local needs.

Changes arising from this two-year review project will be introduced through processes of phased implementation which will extend beyond the life of the review.

The National CLW Advisory Group plays a critical role in ensuring a wide range of stakeholder voices and experiences are represented in the review process. The group has met twice this year to agree and define the scope, deliverables, assumptions, interdependencies and risks involved.

#### **PCIF Baseline Funding**

Following agreement at the GMS National Oversight Group, we are exploring the potential to baseline the PCIF from 2026/27 financial year, aligning to reporting timescales attached to the Primary Care Phased Investment Programme. We are establishing a short life working group to consider the opportunities and risks associated with baselining the fund and the arrangements required to mitigate the risks identified. The sub-group will also consider the potential for baselining the Vaccination Transformation Programme (VTP) element of PCIF prior to 26/27, recognising that the VTP element of Primary Care Improvement Plans is now complete and that there is parallel work underway to baseline core vaccinations funding.

We will develop options for how we administer CLW funding at the national level as the PCIF baselining work develops.

I hope my response provides an informative update on the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring CLW service sustainability and is helpful to the Committee's consideration of the petition.

**Primary Care Directorate**