

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

10th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday  
8 June 2022

PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and  
training challenges for rural healthcare in  
Scotland

## Note by the Clerk

<b>Lodged on</b>	16 September 2021
<b>Petitioner</b>	Maria Aitken on behalf of Caithness Health Action Team
<b>Petition summary</b>	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to find ways for localised training, recruiting and retaining healthcare staff in difficult to recruit positions in Scotland.
<b>Webpage</b>	<a href="https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1890">https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1890</a>

## Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [4 May 2022](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to invite the petitioner to provide evidence at a future meeting.
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 decided to hear evidence from petitioners on several petitions on the topic of rural healthcare. This petition will therefore be considered alongside PE1845, PE1915 and PE1924.
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's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
7. A private SPICe questions paper has also been supplied to Members for this week's evidence sessions (Paper 8 in your papers pack).

## **Action**

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

### **Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

# PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and training challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland

## Petitioner

Maria Aitken on behalf of Caithness Health Action Team

## Date lodged

16/09/2021

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to find ways for localised training, recruiting and retaining healthcare staff in difficult to recruit positions in Scotland.

## Previous action

We have contacted and communicated with MSPs Rhoda Grant and Edward Mountain about issues with mental health provision, orthodontics and maternity services for Caithness. They are both very concerned and supportive of additional measures to support healthcare training and recruitment and retention in difficult to recruit areas in Scotland. We have all met with NHS Highland management to discuss ways forward. CHAT have also contacted Universities and spoke to healthcare professionals.

## Background information

There has been a continued centralisation of primary health services and centralised training for professional healthcare qualifications in specific urban areas. This is having a severe detrimental impact on recruitment to rural areas in Scotland in roles such as midwifery, orthodontics, paediatrics, allied health professionals, psychiatry and mental health services.

An example of this centralised practice is Midwifery. Midwifery training is currently centrally based in three central areas of Scotland. The fast track to midwifery training with Highlands and Islands University has not been financed this year.

Rural challenges have been addressed historically. For example, teaching positions in Scotland used to be difficult to recruit to, but local Universities produced the Child and Youth Studies on-line degree course and PGDE Distance Learning teaching qualification.

The healthcare challenge could be addressed by creating training opportunities locally with clear qualification pathways, allocating affordable housing in hard to recruit areas and enhancing payments for recruitment.

## Annexe B

### Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and training challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland on 4 May 2022

**The Convener:** Rhoda Grant was going to join us for our consideration of petition PE1890, but I think that she made the points that she might have wished to make in relation to the petition on rural healthcare that we considered earlier. PE1890, which was lodged by Maria Aitken on behalf of Caithness Health Action Team, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to find ways to provide localised training, recruitment and retention of healthcare staff in difficult-to-recruit positions in Scotland. We have received a written submission from Edward Mountain, which was circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

At our previous consideration of the petition, we agreed to seek NHS Highland's views. It has now responded, outlining a number of key challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland and the steps that are being taken to address those challenges, which include local accommodation shortages and a lack of affordable housing, challenges in attracting people to social care roles, and an ageing workforce. Those are familiar challenges indeed.

Members will recall that, when we considered the petition previously, we agreed to consider it alongside PE1845. We have talked about taking oral evidence on that petition at a future meeting. Are members content for us to invite the petitioners of both petitions to provide evidence at a future meeting?

*[Members indicated agreement.]*