

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

4th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday 8
March 2023

PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces

Petitioner	Mary Montague
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to support the provision of defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1989

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 14 December 2022.
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. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 566 signatures have been received.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

6. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces

Petitioner

Mary Montague

Date Lodged:

16/11/22

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to support the provision of defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces.

Previous action

I contacted Paul Sweeney MSP to ask about a Petition to widen access to Automated External Defibrillators (AED) and was advised of the Committee route.

Background information

Following the fatal cardiac arrest of a close family member in a large, local supermarket, my request for an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) was refused, despite my highlighting that all other large supermarkets locally provided these.

A bereaved family may be comforted to know that everything that could have been done to save the life of their loved one, was done. The effect on shop staff in such a fatality can be traumatic also.

Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in adults over the age of 40. British Heart Foundation say that "Cardiac arrest is a critical medical emergency" and "Unless treated immediately, leads to death within minutes. With around 3,200 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in Scotland each year, the survival rate is just 1 in 10". An AED increases survival rates but the provision of AEDs is random.

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe (The Information Centre) is a purple rounded rectangle. The text 'SPICe' is in white, with 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in white text on a dark blue background to the right.

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces](#), lodged by Mary Montague

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[PE1989](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to support the provision of defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces. The petitioner requested the installation of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) in their local large supermarket following the death of a close family member from cardiac arrest in the supermarket, and the request was refused.

AEDs are referred to throughout this briefing as Public Access Defibrillators, or PADs, a commonly-used term for AEDs placed in public spaces.

Prevalence of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests and AEDs in Scotland

According to the Scottish Ambulance Service's [out-of-hospital cardiac arrests \(OHCAs\) report 2019-22](#), an average of 3,140 OHCAs occur in Scotland every year. The survival rate of OHCAs in the UK is around 8%; however, [a systematic review of studies exploring the use of defibrillators](#) found that when Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) are attached by bystanders during OHCAs, the median survival rate increased to 32%. People living in Scotland's most deprived areas are [twice as likely to experience an OHCA](#). However, public spaces in deprived areas are [significantly less likely to have PADs installed](#).

The number of Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) in Scotland [doubled between 2019 and 2022](#), with almost 5,000 PADs currently available in communities. The average rate of PAD deployment by the public during OHCA during this period was 8%.

[Grant funding is available towards the cost of PADs](#) and most are purchased by community groups and organisations. Private businesses, such as supermarkets would purchase their own.

Scottish Government strategies

Scotland's initial [OHCA Strategy 2015-20](#) aimed to equip more members of the public with the skills to respond to OHCA. Prior to the introduction of Scotland's first OHCA strategy in 2015, 1 in 20 people who experienced an OHCA survived to be discharged from hospital. By 2020, the survival rate had [doubled to 1 in 10 people](#).

Scotland's current [Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021-26](#) includes two key aims related to PADs:

- Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) will be placed optimally and be as accessible as possible.
- 20% of all OHCA will have a defibrillator applied before the arrival of ambulance service.

Installation of PADs in supermarkets and other public spaces

Supermarkets and other public spaces are not legally required to install PADs, though some of the UK's large supermarket chains, including [Asda](#) and [Tesco](#), have committed to installing PADs in stores, and registering all defibrillators on [The Circuit network](#) to assist ambulance services in identifying nearby PADs.

The Scottish Government's [guidance for organisations considering purchasing and installing a PAD](#) identifies five key factors to consider, advising organisations to think SHOCK:

- S – Sourcing: Purchasing a PAD, and obtaining funding
- H – Health and Safety: Identifying a safe location for installing a PAD

- O – Operability: Considering the storage, maintenance, training, and legal requirements associated with installing PADs
- C – CPR Learning: Highlighting that PADs are most effective when used in conjunction with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The [Save a Life for Scotland](#) programme aims to increase CPR awareness and skills across all ages.
- K – Knowledge and Awareness: Ensuring clear signage so that PADs can easily be found, and [registering PADs with the Scottish Ambulance Service](#) to enable them to direct members of the public to use them during 999 calls.

The [cost to organisations](#) of obtaining PADs, and [lack of public knowledge or confidence in using them](#), have been identified as barriers to increasing the usage of defibrillators in public spaces. In a [UK Parliament debate on 22 June 2022](#), Members called for the introduction of a zero rate of VAT to all defibrillators to improve their affordability.

The UK Parliament is currently considering the [Automated External Defibrillators \(Public Access\) Bill](#), which would require the installation of AEDs in public spaces. However, this would not necessarily cover private premises such as supermarkets.

Scottish Government action

As noted above, the Scottish Government's [Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021-26](#) aims to increase the number of PADs available, and their rate of use during OHCA. This strategy builds on the Scottish Government's [OHCA Strategy 2015-20](#), the implementation of which coincided with a doubling in Scotland's OHCA survival rate.

Scottish Parliament action

A previous petition, [PE1707](#), called on the Scottish Parliament to “urge the Scottish Government to introduce a requirement for all new build or newly renovated or re-purposed buildings with a floorspace of over 7500m² to have a public access defibrillator (PAD) fitted to the exterior of the building, for public use, and for the PADs to be officially registered.” [The SPICe briefing accompanying the petition](#) detailed the actions taken in Parliament regarding this issue to date. The Public Petitions Committee closed the petition during [its meeting on 10 February 2021](#), concluding that the majority of the evidence heard by the Committee was not in favour of the proposal, and that significant

progress had been made by the Scottish Government in other areas pertaining to the installation of PADs.

On 8 February 2022, Paul O’Kane MSP lodged question [S6W-06291](#), asking the Scottish Government what consideration it had given to installing defibrillators in schools. Maree Todd MSP replied that the decision to install defibrillators in schools is a matter for Local Authority consideration. She further responded that the Scottish Government’s OHCA strategy 2021-26 aims to increase the accessibility and registration of PADs, and that the [Resuscitation Research Group](#) at the University of Edinburgh is developing [a tool to show where PADs are most likely to be required](#), in order to guide optimal placement. This project is funded by the Scottish Government.

On 9 December 2022, Foysol Choudhury MSP lodged written question [S6W-13035](#), to ask the Scottish Government for its response to reports that Scotland’s richest areas have almost 10 times as many PADs as its most deprived areas. This question is currently awaiting a response.

Sarah Swift
Researcher
14/12/2022

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

Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport submission of 13 December 2022

PE1989/A: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces

Thank you for your email of 16 November 2022 inviting me to respond to petition PE1989 calling on Scottish Government to support the provision of defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces.

I am grateful to Ms Montague for raising this issue. I am sorry to hear of the loss of a close family member, and extend my sympathies.

I note the challenge that Ms Montague has faced regarding the provision of a defibrillator in her local supermarket. I should outline for the committee that decisions about the provision of life saving equipment, such as defibrillators, in private businesses, is the responsibility of those organisations and it is for them to determine the appropriate resources to put in place. I will therefore focus my response on the wider efforts to improve survival from Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA), including efforts to increase defibrillator usage in Scotland.

Every year over 3,000 people are treated by the Scottish Ambulance Service after having an OHCA. The key factors in determining survival from OHCA are early, high quality hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and counter-shock therapy (defibrillation), which must be applied within a matter of minutes in order to be successful.

The Scottish Government are key partners in Save a Life for Scotland (SALFS). This is a partnership which includes the emergency services, third sector organisations, and academic researchers with a joint aim of increasing OHCA survival rates in Scotland.

Through the delivery of the initial [Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy \(2015-2020\)](#), bystander CPR rates rose from 43% to 64% and survival rates rose from 1 in 20 to 1 in 10. To date, the SALFS partnership have equipped 666,605 people with the skills to save a life. The bystander CPR rate has continued to increase, even throughout the pandemic, to 66%.

This progress has been significant, but we recognise that there is still more to do. The SALFS partnership therefore set out their refreshed strategy, which can be found here [Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy \(2021 – 2026\)](#) .

This includes the key aims of

- Increasing the number of people in Scotland equipped with CPR skills to 1 million people by 2026.
- Increasing bystander CPR rates to 85%.
- Increasing survival from OHCA to 15%.

Of particular relevance to this petition is the strategy's aim of increasing the percentage of OHCA which have a defibrillator applied before the ambulance service arrive from **8% to 20%**. [Scotland's Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Report 2019-2022](#) illustrates 2021-22 rates are currently at 8% . Defibrillator usage appeared to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic but there has been substantial recovery returning to pre-pandemic rates, which is positive.

We agree that it is vital that defibrillators are optimally placed and are as accessible as possible in times of need. SALFS are working to build the evidence base required to make strategic decisions about the placement of defibrillators, to encourage their registration with Scottish Ambulance Service and to increase public confidence and knowledge around defibrillation through embedding defibrillator usage within awareness raising campaigns and the delivery of CPR training.

On the first point, the University of Edinburgh Resuscitation Research Group is undertaking work to analyse the placement of defibrillators across Scotland and map this against the areas which have the highest risk of cardiac arrest occurring. This important work could help defibrillator guardians make informed decisions about where to place their device in order to have the most impact.

Registration of defibrillators is vital to this work as it enables us to understand the current defibrillator footprint. It also ensures that in an incident of cardiac arrest, Scottish Ambulance Service call handlers can locate nearby devices and direct bystanders to it. In Scotland, "[The Circuit](#)", developed by British Heart Foundation and Microsoft, is used by the Scottish Ambulance Service. We would take this opportunity to strongly encourage all defibrillator guardians to register their defibrillator on The Circuit.

[Scotland's Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Report 2019-2022](#) highlights that the number of Public Access Defibrillators (PAD) in communities across Scotland that are registered with "The Circuit" has more than doubled since 2019 and is now at almost 5,000.

I would highlight to the committee that defibrillation is one part of a complex chain of survival from OHCA and it is important to note that SALFS work to implement actions across all aspects of this chain. Recent progress includes;

- The launch of the [Play your Part campaign](#) which seeks to make CPR training inclusive to everyone in Scotland specifically for individuals living with a disability
- The launch of [GoodSAM](#), an app that allows the Scottish Ambulance Service to notify volunteers to attend and provide CPR at a cardiac arrest before the ambulance arrives.

Finally, as noted by Ms Montague, the impact of witnessing an OHCA can be significant. We therefore recognise that the provision of aftercare support is a vital element of the chain of survival. To address this, Scottish Government have recently provided funding to Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland and the Research Resuscitation Group (Edinburgh University) to deliver a pilot project of aftercare support for people who witness an OHCA.

I hope you find the information in our response helpful, and it assures you of our ongoing commitment to improving survival from OHCA in Scotland.