

PE2101/B: Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland

Finlay Carson MSP written submission, 10 September 2024

I am delighted to learn that the petition, PE2101, Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland, has now been published.

As you are possibly aware, I am a strong supporter of this petition, having previously visited the pupils at Troqueer Primary in my constituency of Galloway and West Dumfries.

During my visit I listened to the pupils and, indeed, advised them that I believed submitting a petition to be considered by the Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee would be the best way forward. I was joined by Roger Hill who has been raising awareness and fundraising for the charity CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young).

Roger, who lost his son David, who worked at the Scottish Parliament, raised more than £25,000 during a marathon cycle journey from Edinburgh to Dublin calling at 11 secondary schools in Dumfries and Galloway to highlight Sudden Cardiac Death. His amazing efforts will result in local secondary schools being gifted defibrillators. Previously, on 20 March 2024, I lodged a written question asking the Scottish Government whether it plans to provide funding for defibrillators to be made available in all schools across Scotland.

In her response, Minister Jenni Minto confirmed funding for local authorities is provided through the annual block grant settlement from the Scottish Government. Local authorities should use funding resources allocated to them in the manner which they believe will best meet local needs and circumstances within their respective areas.

Decisions on the installation and maintenance of defibrillators in schools is a matter for local authorities to consider at the local level. A number of organisations provide advice and support for the purchasing and maintenance of defibrillators including the British Heart Foundation and St Johns Scotland.

The children at Troqueer Primary have worked tirelessly in their quest that every school in Scotland has access to an Automated External Defibrillators – something that is provided in all schools in England and Wales via funding from the UK Government.

They looked into the availability of defibrillators in the immediate local area and were shocked to find out how under resourced the local area was.

While there is a local defibrillator, the youngsters discovered it was too far away to have a positive impact on anybody who might suffer a cardiac arrest at the school.

As they correctly pointed out, during busy periods they can have up to 500 people on site.

Can I highlight and commend their actions in raising money to buy an AED, having learned about enterprise, the circulatory system, and, crucially, how important these devices are.

As they point out, rightly so, how worryingly under resourced Scottish schools are compared to their counterparts south of the border. Providing them should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Unfortunately, due to other commitments as convener of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, I will be unable to attend the Citizen Participation And Public Petitions Committee to voice my support for this particular petition.