

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2101: '[Provide Defibrillators for all Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland](#)', lodged by Peter Earl on behalf of Troqueer Primary School

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[PE2101](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide all primary and secondary schools in Scotland with [Automated External Defibrillators](#) (AEDs). The petitioner stated that they looked into the availability of AEDs in their local area as part of a recent school activity, and found that their nearest AED was too far away to be used in an emergency. Troqueer Primary School can have up to 400-500 people on the premises during busy times, and the petitioner stated that it felt unsafe for them not to have access to an AED. Additionally, the petition noted that installing AEDs in schools could help the wider local community.

The petitioner's school raised money to purchase its own AED, and has used this fundraising activity as an opportunity to educate pupils about the circulatory system, and the importance of AEDs.

Impact of AEDs upon out-of-hospital cardiac arrests

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 AEDs were attached by bystanders during OHCAs, the median survival rate increased to 32%.

Public availability of AEDs

The number of AEDs in Scotland [doubled between 2019 and 2022](#), with almost 5,000 AEDs currently available in communities. AEDs were deployed by members of the public before the arrival of an ambulance in 8% of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests during this period. This represents an increase from 2.5% from 2011-15. The Scottish Government's [Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021-26](#) aims to ensure that AEDs are deployed in at least 20% of OHCAs by 2026.

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 AEDs installed](#). Defibrillator guardians are strongly encouraged to register AEDs with [The Circuit UK-wide defibrillator network](#). However, there is currently no requirement to do so.

AEDs in schools

In January 2024, data obtained through Freedom of Information requests submitted by the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party showed that approximately four in ten Scottish schools [do not currently have a defibrillator](#). It is thought that this figure could be an underestimate, as six of Scotland's 32 local authorities did not respond to Freedom of Information requests.

In response to [a recent Parliamentary question](#) on this topic, Jenni Minto MSP stated that the installation of AEDs in schools is a decision for local authorities. Some local authorities have installed AEDs in schools. For example, [Edinburgh City Council](#) has overseen the installation of AEDs in each of the city's secondary schools, with plans to complete installation of AEDs in all primary schools. North Ayrshire's [secondary schools all have AEDs](#) due to local fundraising and campaigning efforts. [Clackmannanshire Council](#) has also installed AEDs in each of the region's secondary schools. The installation of AEDs in primary schools appears to be less widespread in Scotland, though data is not consistently reported.

In England, all state-funded schools are required to have at least one AED on site. The UK Government [provided AEDs to state schools](#) that did not already have one on site, to ensure that all schools met this requirement by the end of the 2022/23 academic year. [Non-statutory guidance](#) was produced by the UK Government to support schools in procuring AEDs, and to guide schools in decision-making regarding community access to their AEDs. The UK Government [confirmed in July 2023](#) that all state schools in England now have at least one AED on school grounds.

Scottish Government actions

In [the Scottish Government's response](#) to PE2101, Jenni Minto MSP stated that "decisions on the installation and maintenance of defibrillators in schools is a matter for Local Authorities to consider at the local level. Funding for Local Authorities is provided through the annual block grant settlement from the Scottish Government and they should use funding resources allocated to them in the manner which they believe will best meet local needs and circumstances within their respective areas."

Ms Minto further responded that the Scottish Government's Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy 2021-26 aims to increase the percentage of OHCA's which have a defibrillator applied before the arrival of the ambulance service to 20%. To achieve this, the [Save a Life for Scotland](#) Partnership, in which the Scottish Government is a partner, is working to support defibrillator guardians to make strategic decisions about the placement of their defibrillators, to encourage their registration with Scottish Ambulance Service and to increase public confidence and knowledge around defibrillation.

She added that the [Resuscitation Research Group](#) at the University of Edinburgh is developing [a tool to show where AEDs are most likely to be required](#), in order to guide optimal placement. This project is funded by the Scottish Government.

Scottish Parliament actions

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee is currently also considering [PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces](#). The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) [submitted written evidence to the Committee](#) in support of this petition, outlining NASUWT Scotland's position that every PE teacher should be fully trained in the use of defibrillators, and that every school should have one installed.

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17 June 2024

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

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