

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

5th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6), Wednesday  
20 March 2024

## PE2070: Stop same-day-only GP appointment systems

<b>Petitioner</b>	Lorraine Russo
<b>Petition summary</b>	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to stop GP surgeries from only allowing same-day appointment bookings, enabling patients also to make appointments for future dates.
<b>Webpage</b>	<a href="https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2070">https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2070</a>

### Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 4 December 2023.
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. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 50 signatures have been received on this petition.
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

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

### Clerks to the Committee

## Annexe A

# PE2070: Stop same-day-only GP appointment systems

## Petitioner

Lorraine Russo

## Date Lodged

04 December 2023

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to stop GP surgeries from only allowing same-day appointment bookings, enabling patients also to make appointments for future dates.

## Previous action

I emailed the First Minister, the Health Secretary and my NHS Board but have received no response.

## Background information

I called my local GP to make an appointment with a doctor to be told there were none available for that day. I asked if there were any for the following days and was told I was unable to book an appointment in the future and I would need to try again at 8am the following morning but due to working full time and travelling at 8am each morning, I am unable to call each morning. I think this needs to change.

I once tried to call my GP at 8am and I rang over 100 times until I spoke to a receptionist, I was then told there were no appointments left for that day and to try again the following day.

The Scottish Government could consider an update to the General Medical Services contract as a possible route to address this issue.

## Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the letters 'SPICe' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark purple background.

The Information Centre  
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

### Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2070: Stop same-day-only GP appointment systems, lodged by Lorraine Russo.

#### Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to stop GP surgeries from only allowing same-day appointment bookings, enabling patients also to make appointments for future dates.

#### Background

Most General Practitioners (GPs) in Scotland are independent contractors. A small number of GPs are in salaried positions employed directly by an NHS Board or a GP Partner.

#### GMS contract

In 2018 the Scottish Government negotiated a new [General Medical Services \(GMS\)contract](#) with the Scottish General Practitioners Committee of the British Medical Association.

[The National Health Service \(General Medical Services Contracts\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2018](#) and [The National Health Service \(Primary Medical Services Section 17C Agreements\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2018](#) regulate the agreements Health Boards can enter into with general medical practitioners to provide primary medical services under the [National Health Service \(Scotland\) Act 1978](#).

## GP appointments

The 2018 GMS contract made reference to the availability of online appointment booking.

“Under the proposed new contract, GP practices will be required to provide online services to patients such as appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering, where the practice already has the existing computer systems and software required to implement online services safely”.

In response to an [FOI request on online services](#) the Scottish Government stated that:

“It will remain for GPs as independent contractors to make their own appointment arrangements based on their understanding of the clinical needs of their patients.”

In response to [S6O-02908](#), “To ask the Scottish Government whether it has reviewed the general practitioner services model, including in relation to whether patients are getting appointments when they need them”, the Cabinet Secretary for Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care, said:

“The issue that the member raises with regard to the appointment system is down to individual GP practices, because the vast majority of those practices are independent contractors. It is their responsibility to design a system that best meets the needs of the contract in order to deliver appointments to patients”.

## The Health and Care Experience Survey

The Health and Care Experience Survey asks people about their experience contacting their GP Practice. [The 2021/22 results](#) reported a “sharp drop in percentage of people finding it easy to contact their GP practice in the way that they want”.

Three quarters of respondents (75%) found it easy to contact the GP practice in the way that they want compared to 85% in the 2019/20 survey. Conversely, the proportion of people who found it not easy to contact their GP Practice in the way that they want increased from 15% to 25%.

## NHS England – Changes to the GP Contract

NHS England has made changes to the [2023/24 GP contract](#) “to make clear that patients should be offered an assessment of need, or signposted to an appropriate service, at first contact with the practice. Practices will therefore no longer be able to request that patients contact the practice at a later time.”

## Scottish Government action

In October 2023 the Scottish Government published [The General Practice Access Principles](#), which state:

- People should have a reasonable choice about how they access services.
- Methods of access to General Practices teams should be clear, understandable, and transparent for people to access the right service for their needs.

## Scottish Parliament action

Parliamentary question [S6O-02908](#): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has reviewed the general practitioner services mode

Debate on motion [S6M-06899](#) on protecting primary care.

**Lizzy Burgess**

**Health and Social Care Team, SPICe Research**

**11/01/2024**

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](mailto: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.

## Annexe C

# Scottish Government submission of 12 February 2024

## PE2070/A: Stop same-day-only GP appointment systems

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to this petition for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to stop GP surgeries from only allowing same-day appointment bookings, enabling patients also to make appointments for future dates. I apologise for the delay in doing so which is due to an administrative oversight.

In November, the Scottish Government published The General Practice Access Principles. This report, which sets out a clear framework for the core principles of how GP services should be delivered – equitably, sensitively, reasonably and appropriately, making the most effective use of resources and systems currently available.

The main principles are:

1. Access to General Practice is inclusive and equitable for people, based on the principles of [Realistic Medicine and Value Based Health & Care](#). Care will be person-centred and based on what matters to the individual.
2. People should have a reasonable choice about how they access services.
3. Services should be approachable, sensitive, compassionate, and considerate to need.
4. General Practices should help people to get the right care from the best and most appropriate person or team to care for them (Right Care, Right Place, Right Time).

We continue to work together with all relevant partners to effectively implement these principles, including through our commitment to the ongoing recruitment of primary care multi-disciplinary teams as well as Phase Two of the GMS Contract.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Primary Care Access Programme has already worked with over 100 general practices to improve access arrangements and continues to run with excellent uptake.

I hope that the Committee finds this response helpful in considering the petition.

**General Practice Policy Division**