

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 12 June 2024  
11th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

## **PE2091: Provide funding to have a CAHMS worker and a nurse based within Scottish high schools**

### **Introduction**

**Petitioner** Kirsty Solman on behalf of Stand with Kyle Now

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to enable a CAHMS worker and a school nurse to be placed within our secondary schools.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2091>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 28 March 2024.
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, 120 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.
6. The Committee has received a submission from the Scottish Government which is set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

### **Action**

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

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**June 2024**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petition**

**PE2091: Provide funding to have a CAHMS worker and a nurse based within Scottish high schools**

### **Petitioner**

Kirsty Solman on behalf of Stand with Kyle Now

### **Date Lodged**

28 March 2024

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to enable a CAHMS worker and a school nurse to be placed within our secondary schools.

### **Background information**

We are a Children's Mental Health Charity who work with families whose children are on waiting lists for CAHMS for anything up to 2 years. This significantly affects their child's education as they refuse to attend school or when they do they struggle and are unable to concentrate or engage.

We believe that access to a CAHMS worker and a nurse in secondary schools will allow children to be identified early when they are struggling with their mental health, and have referrals completed correctly and efficiently. They could also link in with the local primary schools and early education facilities, as early intervention for our children's mental wellbeing is key.

## Annexe B: SPICe briefing on PE2091



[PE2091](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funding to enable a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) worker and a school nurse to be placed within secondary schools. The petitioner represents [Stand with Kyle Now](#), a charity that offers mental health support to children.

### Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

#### CAMHS professionals in schools

The petition calls for the introduction of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) workers and nurses in secondary schools, to enable early identification of children in need of mental health support, and ensure that children are referred to appropriate services. A range of healthcare professionals fall under [the umbrella of CAMHS workers](#), including psychiatrists, social workers, and other mental health practitioners such as counsellors.

The Scottish Government's [2018-19 Programme for Government](#) committed to increasing the provision of counsellors in schools. Local authorities are responsible for implementing school counselling services in line with [Scottish Government guidance](#), and the Scottish Government provided funding to support this provision. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills [confirmed in September 2023](#) that school counselling services are available in all local authorities for children aged 10 and over.

The delivery of these services [can vary across local authorities](#). Some local authorities may assign a counsellor to a specific school, or divide their time between multiple schools within a locality. Other local authorities may provide an authority-wide service, rather than allocating practitioners to particular schools or areas. In practice, this means that although each school has access to counselling support, a counsellor may not always be situated within an individual school.

A 2023 [report by the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland](#) (CYPCS) identified further barriers to accessing school counselling services, including a lack of provision outwith school hours and term time. The report also found that many local authorities require input from teachers and other professionals when deciding

whether a pupil is eligible for counselling, creating another potential barrier to access.

The [most recent data available](#), covering the period from July – December 2022, showed that 546 counsellors were in post across Scotland's local authorities, an increase from 405 during the same period in 2021. This data relates to the number of staff in post, rather than the number of FTE posts. When reporting to the Scottish Government, some local authorities noted that their school counselling services were operating at capacity, and that there was a high demand for the service.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills acknowledged that the Scottish Government [does not currently monitor waiting times](#) for accessing school counselling services, as the service is delivered at local authority level. The [2023 CYPICS report](#) found that only three local authorities had established waiting time targets for access to school counselling, and that some pupils had waited for up to three months to access counselling. The report recommended that all local authorities should have clear waiting time targets, and that compliance with the targets should be part of the Scottish Government's evaluation of the services.

### **School nurses**

[School nurses are](#) specialist public health nurses who provide health and wellbeing support to school age children. The role is usually held by registered nurses or midwives who have completed an additional qualification in school nursing. School nursing services are managed at NHS Board, Integrated Joint Board, or Health and Social Care Partnership level, and service delivery can vary according to local need. School nurses may be assigned to areas or school clusters rather than an individual school.

In 2018, the Scottish Government [refocused the role of Scotland's school nurses](#) to focus on ten key priority areas:

- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Substance Misuse
- Child Protection
- Domestic Abuse
- Looked after children
- Homelessness
- Youth Justice

- Young Carers
- Sexual Health
- Transitions

The Scottish Government [has invested £34 million since 2018](#) to increase the school nursing workforce. An additional 216.6 full-time equivalent school nurses have been recruited during this period.

### **CAMHS waiting times**

The petition states that children are currently waiting up to two years for appointments with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). [Public Health Scotland's most recent data](#) from October-December 2023 states that 3.4% of patients awaiting CAMHS treatment during this period had been waiting for 53 weeks or longer. This is a slight increase from 2.8% the previous quarter, but a reduction from 9.6% from October-December 2022. School counsellors are able to refer pupils to CAMHS and other support services; counsellors completed [374 onward referrals to CAMHS](#) between July and December 2022.

### **Scottish Government actions**

As referenced above, the Scottish Government committed in 2018 to increasing provision of school nurses, and refocusing their role to better support the mental wellbeing of pupils. The Scottish Government aimed to recruit an additional 250 school nurses by the end of 2022. An additional 216.6 full-time equivalent staff [were recruited over this period](#). The Scottish Government provides [£16 million funding to local authorities](#) annually to support the provision of school counsellors.

### **Scottish Parliament actions**

The Parliament's Health, Social Care, and Sport Committee conducted an inquiry into the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and [published its report in May 2022](#). The report explored a number of factors impacting on the mental health of children and young people, including the pandemic, socioeconomic inequality, and experience of care. The Committee welcomed the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring the provision of school counsellors for all secondary schools, and emphasised the importance of effective evaluation of the service. The report also highlighted the role of school nurses in tackling the adversity faced by some children in secondary schools.

The report further noted that supporting the mental wellbeing of school pupils requires a whole systems approach, and recommended that the Scottish Government consider dedicated mental health training for teachers. In [its response](#)

[to the report](#), the Scottish Government stated that [a professional learning resource](#) had been developed for all school staff. The resource seeks to provide all school staff with knowledge of mental health and wellbeing in schools, as part of a whole school approach to promoting mental wellbeing for pupils.

**Sarah Swift**

**Researcher**

3 May 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.

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## **Annexe C: Written submission**

### **Scottish Government submission of 30 April 2024**

#### **PE2091/A: Provide funding to have a CAHMS worker and a nurse based within Scottish high schools**

The Scottish Government would like to begin by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to respond to petition **PE2091**, submitted by Ms Solman, on behalf of the 'Stand with Kyle Now' Charity. We are sorry to hear of the negative experiences families have faced when seeking mental health support for children and young people, and we thank Ms Solman for raising these concerns.

Mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people in schools remains an absolute priority for the Scottish Government. Schools form a key pillar of our local communities and play an important part in helping children and young people as they move through different transition points in their lives. Schools support children, young people and families to understand internal and external factors that affect them and to build the skills and resilience they need to face challenges into adulthood.

#### **Access to School Nurses**

With regard to Ms Solman's request on school nurses placed in high schools - all primary and secondary schools in Scotland are able to access the support of School Nurse Services. In Scotland, the school nurse role was transformed in 2018, to ensure a focus on areas which are most likely to impact on a child's health and wellbeing through each life stage. This includes a focus on emotional health and wellbeing. School nurses are able to use their professional skills and expertise to support the mental health of children. They are also able to make referrals to more specialist services (such as CAMHS) where appropriate.

The Scottish Government has invested over £34 million since 2018. This has supported the recruitment of an additional 216.16 whole time equivalent school nurses which has meant that all Health Boards in Scotland have been able to recruit additional school nurses.

#### **Support and guidance currently available within schools**

Under Curriculum for Excellence, health and wellbeing is one of the three core areas considered to be the responsibility of all school staff to support. Therefore it is expected that all adults working in schools will take collective responsibility for supporting and developing children and young people's mental, social and physical wellbeing. This is outlined in our 'Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing – Framework', published in August 2021. The Framework can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/whole-school-approach-mental-health-wellbeing/>

The Framework provides practical measures schools and local authorities can use to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. It details the role of all school staff in working collaboratively with other agencies to support children and young people. The Framework also identifies that schools play a key role in supporting those with poor mental health and wellbeing through implementing clear referral policies and developing pathways, should additional support be required. The 'Whole School Approach Framework' is clear in outlining that fostering relationship-based and nurturing approaches - which are trauma-informed - is key to providing the support children and young people need. This means, where a child or young person may be identified as potentially benefiting from CAMHS support, schools should be equipped to provide appropriate and sensitive onward referral and discuss these concerns with partner agencies.

This multi-agency approach to supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing at school is particularly important when considering that the CAMHS workforce, as a bespoke group of clinical specialists, operates in a targeted way. A reliance on partnership working, with the wider school and children and families workforce, is important because for the vast majority of children and young people, the support they need should be found in local community supports. The Scottish Government has provided local authorities with over £15 million per annum to provide community mental health and wellbeing supports and services for children, young people and families. In total, over £50 million has been invested since 2020 with a further £15 million committed for 2024/25. Local authorities report that, in the first half of 2023, more than 58,000 children, young people and their family members accessed community-based mental health support.

A further example of this partner working is in educational psychology, where professionals work with other school staff who have identified children and young people experiencing problems which affect their learning. Educational Psychologists build capacity in schools, working with other school staff to support children with additional support needs. They implement person centred approaches to tackle the impact of learning differences, preventing these challenges from causing further harm to a child or young person's mental and emotional development and wellbeing.

By implementing a multi-agency approach, children, young people and their families can get the most appropriate support, at the right time, in a setting which best meets their needs and be appropriately referred to more specialist services such as CAMHS where necessary.

To further embed the 'Whole School Approach', the Framework has been developed and centred around the Scottish Government's 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) approach. GIRFEC articulates the importance of partnership working and provides a shared language which professionals across all public and third-sector organisations can deploy to provide support. In line with the children's planning elements of GIRFEC, schools and children's services work closely with CAMHS, and other relevant health and social care partners, to ensure there are clear and streamlined pathways in place for onward referral.



The 'GIRFEC National Practice Model' supports school staff and their partners to consider ways in which they can help improve wellbeing for a child or young person; including support for parents/carers. It provides a structure to analyse information consistently, allowing professionals to holistically take account of a child or young person's needs. It allows for easy identification of the strengths and challenges they may face, and can assist in identifying the most appropriate offer for timely support. More information regarding the model can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/national-practice-model/>

To further support school staff in the implementation of the 'Whole School Approach', in June 2021, we published a new professional learning resource for all school staff. The resource provides the essential learning required to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. This work has ensured staff have access to the training and support materials they need to develop the skills critical to implementing the 'Whole School Approach'. Although aimed at school staff, the resource is free and available to anyone who wishes to access it. The resource can be accessed at: [CYPMH – Professional Learning Resource](#).

In addition, Education Scotland provide tools, guidance, and self-evaluation, for school staff to further strengthen support to children and young people and aid in the implementation and evaluation of embedding the 'Whole School Approach'.

The Committee will also be aware that the Scottish Government continues to provide local authorities with an annual investment of £16 million to support counselling services in place through secondary schools. These services are available to all children in Scotland aged 10 years and over. Counselling is just one of a range of mental health supports available to secondary school pupils, but is a key investment in an important preventative approach. School counsellors have helped children and young people explore, understand and overcome issues in their lives to improve their resilience, which may prevent the need for higher tier treatment approaches. Local authorities report that 13,150 children and young people accessed school counselling between July-December 2022.

Alongside this focus on early intervention and prevention, we continue to tackle unacceptably long waits for those children and young people who require CAMHS support. Whilst still work in progress, it was encouraging to see significant and sustained progress in the latest quarterly performance statistics. National performance against the 18 weeks CAMHS standard was the highest achieved since the quarter ending March 2016 and, despite increased demand, 1 in 2 people referred to CAMHS now start treatment within 6 weeks. We will continue to work with Health Boards to secure future improvement.

The Scottish Government would like to thank Ms Solman for raising her concerns with the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee. We hope that the information outlined above assures the Committee that supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people through schools is a top priority for the Scottish Government. While we appreciate Ms Solman's call for CAMHS staff to be directly based in high schools, we hope the Committee is satisfied that the approach adopted in Scotland is focused on securing the best outcomes for all children, young

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people and families. This allows CAMHS staff to focus on their important clinical role, while ensuring all of the adults who support children and young people in schools have the skills, knowledge and links to partner services they need to get those they support to the right care at the right time.

**Mental Health Directorate**