

PE1707/G

Scottish Government submission of 21 January 2021

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2020 on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee regarding consideration of further questions in relation to Petition PE1707 – Public Access Defibrillators. We welcome the opportunity to reply to the Petitions Committee.

We thank Mrs Orr for raising the petition, and commend the work of Jayden's Rainbow Campaign in raising funds to have defibrillators placed in schools and public places. We also fully encourage the Campaign's work in ensuring that PADs provided in local communities are registered with the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS). They have set an excellent example that we would encourage others to follow. This debate is an important one and one which should include voices from across Scotland.

It may help if I respond to the committee's queries in the order they have raised them.

1. Increased funding to Save a Life for Scotland;

Within the lifetime of the current out of hospital cardiac arrest strategy, the Scottish Government has provided over £725,000 of funding to the Save a Life for Scotland (SALFS) partnership, including £50,000 a year for operational costs. All members have a key role to play in the sustainability of SALFS and we actively encourage other partners to financially contribute to the work of the partnership.

2. Improved life saving skills taught in schools (this can currently be taught as part of various classes or not at all but it is already mandatory in England);

Scottish Government officials met with Education Scotland, St. Andrew's First Aid and the British Red Cross at the start of 2020 to explore ways in which first aid education could be taught more widely in schools. However, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has since stalled progress. We will reconvene these discussions as soon as it is appropriate to do so. Under the provisions of Curriculum for Excellence, the Scottish Government does not mandate on any aspects of the Scottish curriculum. Education authorities and schools have the flexibility to decide upon the content of their own lessons at the local level, including whether to offer first aid education at school.

3. making the provision of PADs in non-residential buildings compulsory;

Building standards are a reserved matter for the Westminster Parliament. However, the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 section 1 allows Scottish Ministers to make regulations regarding the construction of buildings, their fittings and equipment for the purpose of securing the health, safety and welfare of persons in or about those buildings.

The Scottish Government is currently considering permitted development rights for defibrillators on public buildings, which would remove the need to apply for planning

permission to place a PAD in an external area of a building. We aim to provide an update in Summer 2021.

4. Include CPR and PAD training in compulsory health and safety training (as with fire extinguishers);

Health and safety at work is a reserved matter for the Westminster Parliament. Unfortunately the Scottish Government could not take action to legally require that employers include these topics in their health and safety training. However, the Scottish Government will liaise with the Health and Safety Executive in Scotland to further explore CPR and PAD training options within health and safety training.

5. Issue national guidance on the placement of PADs

As part of the aims of the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy the Scottish Government published OHCA: A Guide to PADs in March 2018. The guide provides practical advice to those considering a purchase and installation of a PAD for their local community.

6. Local projects that acquire and train people in the use of PADs were commended and noted as being successful on a small scale. Witnesses, however, agreed that the balance of responsibility for this must move towards the Scottish Government to demonstrate leadership in this important area of public health. It was felt that only the Scottish Government has the power and resources to ensure this happens on a large scale.

The Scottish Government does not have a direct role in the PAD/CPR training of members of the public, so this is the decision of the independent organisations and charities who deliver the training. Discussion on what steps the Scottish Government can take to support PAD placement continues at leadership level.

I hope this reply is helpful to the petitioner and the PPC.