

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 10 December 2025  
19th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

## PE2186: Review the Personal Footcare Guidance to ensure equity to access footcare services in rural and remote areas in Scotland

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Maria Aitken on behalf of Caithness Health Action Team

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the Personal Footcare Guidance to ensure equity of access to toenail cutting services in rural and remote areas of Scotland. Everyone should have access to healthcare, including footcare services, no matter where they live. To deny people access leaves them vulnerable to infection, less mobile and more at risk of falling. The Personal Footcare Guidance fails to consider mitigations to ensure equity of access to toenail cutting services.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2186>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 22 September 2025.
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, 84 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**  
**December 2025**

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

### **PE2186: Review the Personal Footcare Guidance to ensure equity to access footcare services in rural and remote areas in Scotland**

#### **Petitioner**

Maria Aitken on behalf of Caithness Health Action Team

#### **Date Lodged**

22 September 2025

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the Personal Footcare Guidance to ensure equity of access to toenail cutting services in rural and remote areas of Scotland. Everyone should have access to healthcare, including footcare services, no matter where they live. To deny people access leaves them vulnerable to infection, less mobile and more at risk of falling. The Personal Footcare Guidance fails to consider mitigations to ensure equity of access to toenail cutting services.

#### **Background information**

The Personal Footcare Guidance outlines who can carry out personal footcare, including clipping and filing toenails, based on a risk assessment. This includes the person, their family, friends or carers. Even if you are entitled to personal care, you can wait months to be assessed. Some carers do not always cut toenails or are not trained, and paying a podiatrist can cost over £40. You also may not be able to get a carer due to where you live.

Lack of this vital service detrimentally impacts on people's mobility and they are more likely to suffer a serious fall. They are also more vulnerable to cuts on their feet due to inappropriate toenail cutting, leading to increased risk of infection, sepsis or even gangrene. This can lead to longer hospital stays, impacting on people's independence and quality of life while they wait for a personal care plan before discharge.

## **Annexe B: SPICe briefing on PE2186**

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

The petitioners are calling for a review of [Personal Footcare Guidance \(PFG\)](#) which, they believe, negatively impacts people in rural and remote areas more than in other areas because of the difficulties in accessing foot care and support with nail cutting etc. The petitioner argues that vulnerable people attempting to look after their own footcare are more at risk of falling or infection.

Personal footcare entails:

#### **Toenail care**

- Clipping and filing toenails safely and keeping them at a length which feels comfortable

#### **Skin care**

- Smoothing and moisturising dry and rough skin
- Keeping feet clean, dry, comfortable and warm
- Checking for cracks and breaks in the skin
- Looking for signs of infection or other obvious early problems and seeking professional advice

#### **Checking footwear**

- Checking footwear for comfort, fit, state of repair and safety

### **Eligibility for personal footcare services**

If someone [is assessed by the local authority as requiring free personal care](#), then they are entitled to receive help with personal footcare free of charge. [The Community Care and Health \(Scotland\) Act 2002](#) and its 2018 amendment explicitly list toenail trimming as a personal care task that must not be charged for by local authorities.

The Scottish Government has submitted a response to the petition, stating they have no intention to review the PFG, although it was 'refreshed' in March 2025. They state that it is up to health boards to decide how they deliver specific services and how they ensure healthcare is safe, effective and person-centred and tailored to the needs of the local population and local priorities.

Since 2013 the consistent position of the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland is that 'Routine nail cutting and personal footcare are considered part of daily hygiene, not a clinical service provided by NHS podiatry. There has been no change in policy by the Scottish Government in relation to this.'

**Anne Jepson, SPICe**

**Senior Researcher**

22 October 2025

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 written submission, 13 October 2025**

#### **PE2186/A: Review the Personal Footcare Guidance to ensure equity to access footcare services in rural and remote areas in Scotland**

##### **Does the Scottish Government consider the specific ask of the petition to be practical or achievable?**

No, the Scottish Government does not intend to review the Personal Footcare Guidance at this time. While the Scottish Government sets the strategic policy direction for NHS Scotland, decisions about the delivery of specific services are made by individual NHS Boards. These Boards are responsible for ensuring safe, effective, and person-centred care tailored to local populations needs and priorities. This includes support for self-management to promote foot health, short episodes of care for specific foot conditions, and specialist treatment for patients assessed as being at significant risk of serious health or foot-related complications. NHS Boards must prioritise services to make best use of available resources and ensure that specialist expertise is directed to those who need it most.

The current guidance is already supported by a wide range of national policy frameworks that promote equitable access to personal care, including footcare, across Scotland. These include:

Free Personal and Nursing Care legislation, which ensures that adults of any age who are assessed as needing personal care, including toenail cutting, receive it free of charge regardless of location, condition or means.

The Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 and its 2018 amendment explicitly list toenail trimming as a personal care task that must not be charged for by local authorities.

Local authorities are responsible for conducting needs assessments and developing care plans that reflect individual requirements, preferences and circumstances, including those in rural and remote areas.

The guidance is aligned with key national strategies such as the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, the National Carer Strategy, Realistic Medicine and the Scottish AHP Public Health Strategic Framework, all of which promote person-centred and accessible care.

In addition, the Healthcare Framework for Adults Living in Care Homes (2022) reinforces the expectation that individuals in care homes receive the same level of healthcare access and support as those living in the wider community.

We acknowledge the concerns raised in the petition. However, decisions about service delivery and patient treatment are made at a local level by NHS Boards, Integration Joint Boards, social work and healthcare professionals.

**What, if any, action the Scottish Government is currently taking to address the issues raised by this petition, and is any further action being considered that will achieve the ask of this petition?**

The Personal Footcare Guidance refresh was [published on the Scottish Government website in March 2025](#), the aim of this update was to bring the published 2013 [Personal Footcare Guidance](#) up to date. Specifically, this refresh was to update advice for individuals, carers, care providers and families in the provision of personal footcare and to share information on resources.

The refreshed 2025 guidance maintains the clear and consistent position first set out in 2013. Routine nail cutting and personal footcare are considered part of daily hygiene, not a clinical service provided by NHS podiatry. There has been no change in policy by the Scottish Government in relation to this.

The Committee should note that this refreshed Personal Footcare Guidance has been developed in alignment with the evolving priorities of the Service Renewal Framework and the Operational Improvement Plan, which now guide the transformation of health and social care in Scotland following the conclusion of the Care and Wellbeing Board. It is designed to ensure that individuals in Scotland know and understand how to receive the right care, at the right time, and in the right place in respect of footcare services. This guidance reinforces the importance of integrated care, prevention, anticipation, and supported self-management, in line with national efforts to improve service delivery and outcomes.

A Short Life Working Group (SLWG) led the refresh of this guidance. This group was in a position to provide advice, and expertise whilst supporting engagement with relevant stakeholders.

Members of the group included clinicians, podiatry leads at NHS Boards, NHS Education Scotland (NES) and Royal College of Podiatry (profession specific) to allow broad input into the content and ensuring accuracy in respect of how services are currently delivered in Scotland.

**Is there any further information the Scottish Government wish to bring to the Committee's attention, which would assist it in considering this petition?**

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been carried out, in line with the Scottish Government's legal obligations, which covers all nine protected characteristics defined by law. Geographic location, including rural or remote areas, is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Decisions regarding service delivery in these areas are the responsibility of individual NHS Boards, Integration Joint Boards, Social Work and health professionals, who are best placed to assess and respond to local needs, and who will undertake their own process and assessments to support them to do so.

**Allied Health Professions Strategy and Policy**