



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01385

Name of petitioner

Shona Haslam on behalf of Asthma UK Scotland - Youth Ambassadors

Petition title

Improving the lives of children with asthma across Scotland

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to (1) provide appropriate support and training to school staff to ensure that all schools create and implement a policy to support school pupils with asthma; (2) implement a set of consistent national standards for asthma services in schools; (3) increase the number of school nurses trained to treat asthma; and (4) ensure that school inspections measure the performance of schools in supporting children with asthma.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Asthma UK Scotland has been campaigning for many years to improve asthma care and awareness in schools. We have spoken to many MSPs on this issue and had several meetings with the Scottish Government. We worked with the Scottish Government on the Administration of Medicines in Schools guidance.

However it is still the case that children are not getting the care they require at school and are being excluded from school activities because of their asthma.

In the 2009 Asthma UK report “Missing Out” we found that—

- 87% of children with asthma had missed at least one day of school because of their asthma
- 49% had problems joining in with general lessons
- 48% had problems going on school trips
- 73% had issues when joining PE lessons.

More needs to be done to ensure that children with asthma are not being excluded.

The Scottish Government has worked with us and NHS Quality Improvement Scotland to develop standards for children’s care e.g. Asthma services for children and young people (2007) which have been effective.

However no NHS board succeeded in meeting the standard (www.nhshealthquality.org/nhsqis/4971.html) and more has to be done to ensure that children with asthma are safe at school.

Asthma training for teachers should be much more widespread and inspection should include the way schools care for children with health conditions. We have received funding to carry out work in schools including teacher training and peer support but this money is time limited and our capacity means only a fraction of schools can be reached. There must be a clear commitment from the Scottish Government to extend

this work so that children can be safe and do not suffer exclusion due to their condition. We recently met with officials in the Scottish Government who stated that it was unable to continue funding this project.

Petition background information

For someone with asthma, being at school is a daily challenge. Imagine going to work every day but breathing through a straw for the entire time, that is what it is like for a child with asthma when they are at school. They face bullying because of their wheeze, cough, or additional weight as a result of medication. They have to take their inhaler regularly which then draws attention to their condition. Many teachers are lacking in understanding about the condition and may either force pupils to do activities that they are not able to do, or leave them out of things which they can do. Inhalers are still locked away in cupboards and offices and cannot be accessed easily by the pupils.

The message boards of Asthma UK website are full of really shocking stories of how children with asthma are suffering at school. One young person in Dumfries and Galloway told us:

'I was in PE and needed to take my inhaler. My teacher said "Just wait a minute, wait a minute" because she couldn't be bothered walking up to the changing room and opening the door for me, she's saying wait a minute but there is half an hour until the end of the period and I'm in the corner – dying'.

And this is not an uncommon occurrence. In March 2010 a jury at an inquest found that 11 year old Sam Linton was the victim of systemic failures and neglect after having an asthma attack at school. Two of Sam's friends saw he was in distress and tried to raise the alarm. Sam's lips were turning blue and yet he was not taken to hospital until the end of the day when his mother came to the school. He was taken to hospital but died shortly after.

Asthma UK Scotland believes that our asthma education in schools would mean that this situation could not happen in Scotland. By educating teachers and pupils in what to do in an asthma attack, then no child would have to suffer like Sam, and yet there is no funding available to supply this important training. At a cost of only £40k per year it is not expensive.

But we need a national steer from the Scottish Government, a national commitment to children with asthma as they go to school every day. A standard that would ensure children are safe, that they can be confident that if they should suffer an asthma attack then someone will know what to do. We would like the Public Petitions Committee to ask the Scottish Government how it proposes to ensure that every school in Scotland has an asthma policy and every teacher in Scotland is trained in how to deal with an asthma attack.

We would also like the Committee to ask the Scottish Government why such a successful programme of training cannot be funded centrally.

Asthma UK Scotland would welcome the support of the Committee in achieving the following step as we believe they would improve the care and awareness of asthma in schools:

1. Provide appropriate support and training to both teachers and support staff, so they can support children and young people with asthma in the event of an asthma attack at school and understand how to fully include them in lessons and activities. We recommend that all schools should access the Asthma UK Alert to Asthma training programme and this should be coordinated and paid for through local education authorities.
2. Ensure that all schools create and implement a policy to support children and young people with asthma, backed by an awareness raising campaign. We believe all schools should have a policy in place setting out how they plan to meet the support needs of children with asthma and this should include measures on medicines management.

3. Implement a set of consistent national standards for asthma services. There is a two and half fold difference in asthma emergency hospital admissions for children between the highest and lowest areas in difference in Scotland. Although we have children's standards for asthma care more needs to be done to tackle these huge variations and dramatically reduce the number of emergency admissions.

4. Increase the number of school nurses who are trained in asthma: we believe there should be access to a school nurse in every school for every pupil with asthma. School nurses are well placed to play a key role in children's health and well-being. They bridge the gap between school and health services and can advise teachers about asthma, help schools to implement policies for medical conditions and give guidance on emergency medicine. More resources are needed to make this a reality.

5. School inspections should measure the performance of schools in supporting and including children with health conditions. Inspection frameworks across the UK should ensure schools prioritise the health and well-being of their pupils and that schools are actively implementing school asthma policies.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01385>

Related information for petition

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NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

86

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