



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE01735](#)

Main Petitioner: Elaine Miller

Subject: Include Pelvic Floor education in the Baby Box scheme

Calls on the on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to include pelvic floor education in Baby Boxes, to reduce stress incontinence amongst new mothers and improve women's life-long health and well-being.

Background

Stress Incontinence

Urinary incontinence is the unintentional passing of urine. There are several types of urinary incontinence. The most common are stress incontinence, which occurs when the bladder is under pressure such as when someone coughs or laughs, and urge incontinence, when urine leaks out when someone has a sudden urge to urinate. Stress incontinence is usually the result of the weakening or damaging of the muscles used to prevent urination, such as the pelvic floor muscles and the urethral sphincter ([NHS Inform](#)).

Pelvic floor muscles

Pelvic floor muscles are used to control the flow of urine. Weak or damaged pelvic floor muscles can cause urinary incontinence. About one-third of women have urinary incontinence and up to one-tenth have faecal incontinence after childbirth. [Pelvic floor muscle training](#) is commonly recommended during pregnancy and after birth for both prevention and treatment of incontinence ([Cochrane Review](#)).

In July 2017, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) and Royal College of Midwives (RCM) issued a [joint statement on Pelvic Floor Muscle Exercises](#) which highlighted the importance of early intervention for pelvic floor muscle training for childbearing women, to minimise pelvic floor damage and help avoid the common problems of incontinence or pelvic organ prolapse during the childbearing years or in later life.

The National institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has produced guidance on [Urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse in women](#):

[management](#) (NG123). This notes that pelvic floor muscle training is just as effective as surgery for around half of women with stress urinary incontinence and recommends that pelvic floor muscle training is used a first-line treatment for stress urinary incontinence.

NHS Scotland's guide to pregnancy, labour and birth [Ready Steady Baby!](#) has information on what pelvic floor muscles do, how these muscles change during pregnancy and pelvic floor muscle exercises.

Baby Box Scheme

The [Scottish Government's Baby Box Scheme](#) opened in June 2017 for all babies due on or after 15 August 2017. The [boxes include a number of items](#) such as clothing, a digital ear thermometer, a towel, a bath sponge, books and a playmat. Baby Boxes are delivered at least 4 weeks before a baby's due date.

Scottish Government Action

Prior to the roll out of the baby box scheme the Scottish Government commissioned [research on parents' views on Scotland's Baby Box and the items provided to inform re-procurement of its contents](#). In 2017-18 £7,527,764.49 was spent on baby boxes ([S5W-22878](#)).

Scottish Parliament Action

A number of relevant motions and questions have been lodged including.

[Question S5W-19998](#): Alex Cole-Hamilton, Date Lodged: 16/11/2018

To ask the Scottish Government what information regarding (a) pelvic floor exercises, (b) general pelvic health and (c) incontinence is contained in the Baby Box.

Answered by Maree Todd (03/12/2018):

There is no information regarding pelvic floor exercises, general pelvic health or incontinence contained in the Baby Box.

The Ready, Steady, Baby guide, which gets distributed to all mothers at their first midwife check-in and is also available online, has information on pelvic floor exercises and urinary incontinence.

[Question S5W-17848](#): Neil Findlay, Date Lodged: 24/07/2018

To ask the Scottish Government what proportion of GPs routinely do six-week postnatal checks that include abdominal muscles, prolapse inspections and advice on returning to exercise.

Answered by Jeane Freeman (14/08/2018):

The Scottish Government does not hold this information centrally.

The Scottish Government expects clinicians to assess and treat patients appropriately in accordance with evidence-based clinical practice guidance from the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) and the National

Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). NICE guidelines on Postnatal care up to 8 weeks after birth advise women should be asked about their health and wellbeing and that of their baby by healthcare professionals at each postnatal check. This should include asking women about their experience of common physical health problems. Any symptoms reported by the woman or identified through clinical observations should be assessed.

The latest publication of Ready Steady Baby offers new mothers advice on staying active. It recommends that women build some form of exercise into their day gradually such as taking their baby out in the pram. It promotes that exercise can improve the wellbeing of both mum and baby.

Midwives would routinely discuss physical and emotional health and wellbeing with women in antenatal and postnatal care, including advice on perineal/wound hygiene and give pelvic floor/other exercise information after giving birth.

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SPICe
21 August 2019

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP