

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 5 February 2025
2nd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2048: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Introduction

Petitioner James Anthony Bundy

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase awareness of the symptoms of stroke by reviewing its promotion of the FAST stroke campaign, and ensuring that awareness campaigns include all the symptoms of a potential stroke.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2048>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 9 October 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to NHS regional health boards, the Scottish Ambulance Service, and the Scottish Government. The Committee also agreed to hold a roundtable discussion on the issues raised by the petition, and to delegate authority to the Convener to work with the clerks on inviting relevant stakeholders to participate.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from seven of the fourteen regional NHS boards, the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, the Scottish Ambulance Service, and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 17 October 2023.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 1,544 signatures have been received on this petition.

Today's meeting

8. At today's meeting the Committee will hear evidence from –

- Sophie Bridger, Policy and Campaigns Manager, Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland
- Michael Dickson, Chief Executive, Scottish Ambulance Service
- Professor Arshad Majid, Professor of Cerebrovascular Neurology, University of Sheffield
- John Watson, Associate Director - Scotland, Stroke Association

And then from –

- Dr Ron Cook, Medical Director, NHS 24
- Professor Mary Joan Macleod, Clinical Pharmacologist, University of Aberdeen
- Professor William Whiteley, Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, University of Edinburgh

Clerks to the Committee
January 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2048: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Petitioner

James Anthony Bundy

Date Lodged

19 September 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase awareness of the symptoms of stroke by reviewing its promotion of the FAST stroke campaign, and ensuring that awareness campaigns include all the symptoms of a potential stroke.

Previous action

I have contacted Keith Brown MSP and requested a meeting be set up to discuss the petition.

Background information

Anthony (Tony) Bundy tragically lost his life on 29th June 2023 after suffering a Basilar Artery Ischaemic Stroke. When Tony started suffering a stroke, his face and arms were unaffected, and his speech was not slurred. This meant that Tony passed the "FAST" stroke test, and was denied the emergency treatment required to save his life until it was too late.

Tony's family are now raising awareness of all the symptoms of stroke, including the inability to stand, cold sweats, eyes struggling to focus, slowed speech, nausea, and vomiting.

We are calling for a review of the FAST stroke campaign, looking at international examples, in order to ensure stroke awareness campaigns include the wider range of symptoms of stroke. This is intended to maximise knowledge amongst the general public and medical profession.

Increasing awareness will hopefully mean fewer families will have to experience the pain and loss that Tony's family has endured.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2048 on 9 October 2024

The Convener: That brings us to PE2048, from James Anthony Bundy. I see that Mr Bundy is with us in the gallery, along with his mother, I believe. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase awareness of the symptoms of stroke by reviewing its promotion of the FAST—face, arms, speech, time—stroke awareness campaign and ensuring that awareness campaigns include all the symptoms of a potential stroke.

We have been joined in our consideration of the petition by our MSP colleagues Stephen Kerr and Alexander Stewart. Good morning to you both.

Stephen Kerr (Central Scotland) (Con): Good morning.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Good morning.

The Convener: We previously considered the petition at our meeting on 6 December 2023, when we agreed to write to the Minister for Public Health and Women’s Health, the Stroke Association and Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland. I am pleased to say that we have received responses from all those that I have just listed, which are detailed in our meeting papers, to which I turn.

The minister tells us that work is on-going to establish existing levels of awareness of stroke symptoms and FAST, with consideration also being given to how awareness of less common symptoms can be increased. The minister also indicated that there are no plans to deviate from supporting the use of the FAST approach, though this position will be regularly reviewed based on the best available evidence.

We have also received a submission from the petitioner expressing disappointment that the Scottish Government has no plans to deviate from the FAST approach. The petitioner has also highlighted that, where clinicians are reliant on the FAST test, that can have devastating effects for patients presenting with less common symptoms, as was the case for his father.

Responses from the Stroke Association and Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland highlight the need for further research before committing to the use of the BE FAST—balance, eyes, face, arms, speech, time—approach in a new nationwide campaign.

Before I ask the committee to comment, would Mr Kerr and Mr Stewart like to address us?

Alexander Stewart: I am delighted to be back again at committee to speak to the petition. I commend and congratulate the Bundy family for their tireless campaign since lodging the petition and prior to that.

It is interesting to hear the minister’s comments, but there is still room for further discussion about how we take forward the issue. We have already heard that there is an opportunity to develop BE FAST as a potential future approach. Indeed, the approach has been used, and there is a real challenge in ensuring that messaging gets out about it. However, there is still the risk of false positives with the use of that approach.

Throughout the campaign, we have all felt that it is better for someone to go to accident and emergency to find out whether they have had a stroke rather than sit at home and dismiss what is occurring because they are not experiencing FAST symptoms. However, they might be experiencing BE FAST symptoms. We need to continue discussing that. In the meetings that the Bundy family and I have had with the minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, there has been quite a lot of discussion on that.

The Scottish Government could work with Public Health Scotland and NHS boards to trial BE FAST. If we have a trial, we could access real results and data, which would allow for informed decisions to be taken. As I said, people who do not fit into the FAST criteria are not given the opportunities to have, for example, a scan or to go through medical processes. Individuals have lost their lives, as Tony Bundy did. I believe that there is still room for improvement.

I urge that a trial be carried out, potentially by one health board, to consider the issue. The subsequent report would show what is happening and give more data. That data will set out the case to progress the matter.

The Convener: Thank you very much, Mr Stewart. Mr Kerr, do you have anything that you wish to add?

Stephen Kerr: I am here because James Bundy works in my office. I have known him and his family for a long number of years. Everyone will be aware of the circumstances that have brought the petition into being.

I just want to say that I completely agree with everything that Alexander Stewart has said. He has made a very reasonable request that the BE FAST approach be trialled somewhere.

I am at a loss, frankly, to understand why the Scottish Government and the minister are not prepared to consider carrying out research, or even to give consideration to the existing body of research in support of the adoption of BE FAST.

It has been put to colleagues and the Bundy family that, were BE FAST to be adopted, there would be an influx of people arriving at accident and emergency believing that they were perhaps having a stroke. The reality is that, if that were to happen and we were able to save lives—in this case, it is very close to home for James Bundy and his family—because the medical staff were aware of the BE FAST approach and the clinicians' prioritisation was governed by a fuller appreciation of the symptoms so that a faster diagnosis could be made, perhaps a life could be saved. Therefore, I find it almost unreasonable that the minister is not prepared to consider even the existing body of research in her considerations and that the Government is not prepared to undertake or commission some research of its own. The cost of all those requests is minimal, but the value of a life is infinite.

The Convener: Thank you, Mr Kerr. The issues that are raised in the petition are of considerable interest to colleagues on the committee, and there are a number of things that we might now reasonably consider doing to take it forward. Colleagues, do you have any suggestions?

Maurice Golden: We should first write to the national health service regional health boards and the Scottish Ambulance Service seeking information on any local stroke

awareness pilots that they have undertaken, including their outcomes. In addition, we should write to the Scottish Government highlighting the contributions from Mr Stewart and Mr Kerr on data, on consideration of trials and on commissioning research, and to seek an update on its work to establish existing levels of awareness of stroke symptoms and whether that includes consideration of the awareness among clinical staff of symptoms beyond those captured by the FAST test.

The Convener: I do not know whether colleagues are so minded, but this might be a petition on which we are prepared to take further oral evidence. I wonder whether we might consider convening a round-table discussion of relevant stakeholders to discuss the issues with the committee. That might include the Stroke Association and Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland. The clerks and I could agree which organisations to invite, if the committee is content to leave that task to us. We might then be able to have a more detailed discussion to tease out the issues, all of which might then put us in a stronger position as a committee to address them directly with the minister.

Are colleagues content that we do that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I thank Mr Stewart and Mr Kerr. Again, I note the presence of the Bundy family. I hope that they will be content that we will progress those issues. The evidence session, together with the further written evidence that we will seek, will give us an opportunity to pursue the issues that are raised in the petition.

Annexe C: Written submissions

NHS Borders written submission, 7 November 2024

PE2048/H: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

“The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered the above petition at its meeting on Wednesday 9 October 2024 and agreed to write to NHS regional boards to **seek information on any local stroke awareness pilots they have undertaken, including the outcomes of those pilot studies.**”

NHS Borders has not yet conducted any pilot studies for local awareness activities, and therefore cannot provide details on specific outcomes at this stage. However, NHS Borders remains dedicated to raising public and patient awareness regarding the symptoms and risk factors associated with stroke.

In collaboration with Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland (CHSS) and the Stroke Association, the Stroke Team actively participated in World Stroke Day on October 29th by hosting an information stand at Borders General Hospital. The stand featured resources supporting the FAST campaign and provided informative leaflets and guides on stroke prevention.

To further amplify these efforts, the NHS Borders Communication Team released a media statement and shared social media posts highlighting the FAST campaign and local initiatives. Additionally, promotional posters were distributed across the Emergency and Outpatient Departments.

Looking ahead, NHS Borders is committed to working closely with the newly appointed National Educator for Stroke to implement the new FAST stroke training program for healthcare professionals, as outlined in agreement with Jenni Minto MSP.

Minister for Public Health and Women’s Health written submission, 12 November 2024

PE2048/I: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Thank you for the response of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee following its consideration of PE2048 at its meeting of 9 October. The Committee highlights the contributions from Alexander Stewart MSP and Stephen Kerr MSP calling for a trial of BE FAST to support further data on the BE FAST. I note the Committee is also seeking an update on work to establish existing levels of awareness of stroke symptoms and whether this work includes consideration of the awareness among clinical staff of symptoms beyond those captured by the FAST test.

Research of existing levels of awareness of stroke symptoms and FAST, commissioned by the Scottish Government, has now been completed. This research will inform our future public awareness campaigns to ensure we maximise stroke awareness.

The Scottish Government does not currently plan to run local trials of BE FAST in individual Health Boards. This would be a decision for an individual Board to make and, as highlighted in my reply to Jackson Carlaw MSP, Convener, Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee (CPPPC) of 21 December 2023, the Scottish Government does not currently plan to deviate from the use of FAST. This stance aligns with the positions of both Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland and the Stroke Association.

However, as I stated in my previous response, the National Advisory Committee for Stroke will be asked to review any emerging evidence regarding public awareness and stroke screening tools and provide advice to the Scottish Government regarding the most appropriate action.

I also mentioned in my previous reply we would consider how awareness of the less common symptoms of stroke can be increased. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and I met the Bundy family earlier this year to discuss their campaign work and to pass on our sincere condolences. At the meeting in April, the Cabinet Secretary asked the CMO Specialty Advisor for Stroke, and Chair of the National Advisory Committee for Stroke, Dr Matt Lambert, to review stroke awareness education for clinical staff.

The review has informed the development of an education package, funded by the Scottish Government, to be delivered to staff in GP practices, Emergency Departments, and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Although focusing on FAST, this education will also cover the less common presentations of stroke, including specific symptoms relating to visual field defects and certain presentations of loss of balance.

I wrote to stroke accountable individuals at NHS Boards in September to encourage staff to sign-up up to the Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland FAST education package sessions when these become available. I also Chaired a roundtable meeting with the stroke accountable individuals on 10 October, where I emphasised the importance of the recognition of stroke symptoms and asked attendees to take the lead and discuss this educational opportunity with their colleagues to maximise engagement.

I hope this update is useful and thank you again for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

JENNI MINTO MSP

NHS Tayside written submission, 14 November 2024

PE2048/J: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Public Awareness

NHS Tayside does not currently run local Stroke Public Awareness Campaigns. NHS Tayside is however supporting the National FAST Stroke Awareness campaign led by Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland (CHSS) which launched on 29th October 2024.

Healthcare Professional Awareness

The Scottish Government have commissioned CHSS to deliver stroke recognition training to frontline NHS teams with the aim of improving recognition of people presenting with stroke to the NHS.

The content of this teaching has been reviewed and developed by Dr Matthew Lambert, Consultant in Stroke and Medicine for the Elderly (NHS Tayside), the National Clinical Lead for Stroke and Stroke Specialty Advisor to the CMO, and Katrina Brennan, Clinical Advisor to the Government on Stroke, in collaboration with the CHSS Education Lead.

This teaching includes details about atypical / posterior circulation strokes as well as FAST symptoms. This is due to be rolled out in the next couple of months and will be delivered to teams in Emergency Departments and GP surgeries in all Health Boards. NHS Tayside Training Plan is currently being arranged.

Linked to this, Jenny Minto, the Health Minister with responsibility for stroke has written to all Executive Leads responsible for stroke care, including Lynn Smith, Chief Officer in Acute Services, asking them to support staff engagement with this training. This is supported.

Other teaching is also delivered to a range of doctors and nurses within NHS Tayside by the Stroke Consultants and includes all types of presentation of stroke, not just those with FAST symptoms.

NHS Tayside Stroke team communicates with General Practitioners (GP) and paramedics through our specialist professional to professional (prof-to-prof) advice service, Consultant Connect. The Stroke team provide senior clinical advice and support to GPs and paramedics about people who may have had a posterior circulation stroke. Consultant Connect (prof-to-prof) allows clinicians to discuss complex or unusual clinical presentations with other frontline NHS staff in the community and give an urgent opinion about whether someone is likely to have had a posterior circulation stroke, or not.¹ It also allows more specificity about people presenting with "balance" or "eye" problems (B and E from BEFAST) and an informal way of delivering clinical education to GPs and paramedics.

The Stroke team also provide an in-reach service to the Acute Medical Unit in Ninewells Hospital to review patients who may have had posterior events.

NHS Highland written submission, 18 November 2024

PE2048/K: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Query: to seek information on any local stroke awareness pilots we have undertaken, including the outcomes of those pilot studies.

Response:

- In the Raigmore Hospital Stroke Unit (2A), patients and families are handed FAST packs which include information leaflets detailing symptoms and action to take. The ward also has an information board with posters and contacts for those affected/those who have concerns and symptoms to look out for.

- ED and GA have information leaflets which they give to patients who are discharged home from those areas and not admitted to the Stroke Unit, the information includes worsening statements and points of contact/emergency contacts.
- The Stroke Association lead is visiting the stroke team in Raigmore next Wednesday 20th November and is spending a couple of days here. The national FAST campaign is to be discussed then, this will include a review of our info packs, description of symptoms and any further areas we can promote the FAST campaign in, in addition to posters we have around the premises.
- As an organisation we welcome any interventions that highlight to the public the importance of early identification and response to Stroke symptoms.

I trust that the above answers your enquiry. Please let me know if you have any other queries.

NHS Fife written submission, 18 November 2024

PE2048/L: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Thank you for your letter regarding the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee's consideration of the petition on stroke awareness. NHS Fife welcomes the opportunity to provide information on local stroke awareness campaigns we have undertaken.

NHS Fife has consistently worked to raise awareness of stroke prevention, recognition, and treatment, as part of our broader commitment to improving public health outcomes. NHS Fife has been involved in several local initiatives aimed at enhancing public understanding of stroke symptoms and the importance of early intervention.

One of our recent initiatives involved collaboration with community groups and local primary care networks to disseminate the FAST (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) campaign materials. This initiative, which took place between May and September 2023, focused on targeting high-risk populations, particularly in areas of socioeconomic deprivation, where awareness of stroke symptoms is statistically lower.

The campaign reached over 5,000 individuals. The MCN promoted FAST via a postal campaign in early summer to all Fife GP Practices and Community Pharmacies, providing posters and promotional materials, in addition to dissemination of digital information and resources.

This has been repeated in the month of October 2024. On the 29 October 2024, NHS Fife supported World Stroke Day.

In addition, NHS Fife's CHSS Stroke Educator provided Stroke Recognition, Response and Recovery Workshops for Social Services and Care Home Staff, which included signs and symptoms of stroke; importance of early action and getting people to hospital early; risk factors; common ongoing effects of stroke and supports

available. This also provides opportunity to promote other appropriate stroke sessions. Evaluations of these workshops revealed that participants reported a higher confidence level in recognising potential stroke signs and symptoms.

FAST information is available via the internal staff webpages and NHS Fife public webpages in addition to further stroke information. An awareness raising campaign in conjunction with World Stroke Day took place on 29 October 2024, including FAST information stand, social media promotion of new CHSS FAST campaign and dissemination of physical and digital resources.

While these efforts have shown promising results, we believe that wider national coordination on stroke awareness could further enhance outcomes across Scotland.

NHS Grampian written submission, 22 November 2024

PE2048/M: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

With regard to promotional activity supporting stroke awareness and the use of FAST stroke campaign assets, I can advise that the following actions have been undertaken by NHS Grampian to highlight the symptoms of a potential stroke.

Between 20 August and 3 November 2024, NHS Grampian scheduled stroke-related content 20 separate times across its core social media channels; Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram and Threads, representing 55 individual stories.

Content posted ranged from a focus on World Stroke Day to the re-sharing of the national FAST marketing materials.

During that period (20/08/24 – 03/11/24) NHS Grampian's five main social media channels had the following followers: Facebook = 72,583, Twitter = 26,550, LinkedIn = 18,343, Instagram = 14,243, Threads = 2,509 representing an audience totalling 134,228.

We posted 4,237 posts (include the stroke ones) during that period. Total post impressions¹ for that period were 6,591,344 across the five accounts. Therefore the average impressions per post were 1,555.66. Average post engagement rate² for the period was 2.41%.

The NHS Grampian Daily Brief for staff also highlighted extra materials and signposted stroke-related refresher courses available through TURAS during this period.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran written submission, 22 November 2024

PE2048/N: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

The stroke service at NHS Ayrshire and Arran is provided by a progressive and committed team of staff and the team uses all opportunities to raise the awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke. This incorporates FAST but the team include

¹ The number of times posts appeared on someone's screen.

² Engagement rate measures the performance of content. It tracks how actively involved the audience is with the content, including interactions such as "likes," comments, and sharing.

all of the other symptoms to be cognisant of and this includes being aware of any changes to vision or balance.

On the 29th October 2024 (world stroke day) the stroke team led an awareness day on the University Hospital Crosshouse site. Taking part were nursing and medical staff with representatives from Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland (CHSS). The Managed Clinical Network (MCN) staff were also involved. Throughout the day, information regarding FAST and information from CHSS was shared. Promotional merchandise such as keyrings and pens were disseminated and blood pressure checks for staff and visitors were carried out throughout the day. To promote the day, and to raise awareness of FAST, there was a significant social media campaign where the focus of the message given was "Time is brain" and the importance of calling 999. Stroke being a medical emergency was emphasised.

The MCN are sharing all of the posters regarding FAST, including those from CHSS to all GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacies and opticians in NHS Ayrshire and Arran with a covering letter asking them to display in all of their premises.

The clinical and management teams met with Alan Gemmell MP and Lillian Jones MP on the 25th October 2024 and shared the improvements in the stroke service including thrombectomy and BE-FAST and this was shared by Alan Gemmell in the UK Parliament.

Whilst we understand that more work needs to be carried out before the BE-FAST is adopted, the team at NHS Ayrshire and Arran would very much welcome the opportunity to be a pilot site if this was agreed. One of our consultant staff has advised that BE-FAST would potentially cover the symptoms raised in the petition; balance, gait and visual problems. He has requested some information from NHS Fife as they may have trialled the use of BE FAST although nothing has been published as yet.

In summary, the promotion of signs and symptoms to be aware of in terms of stroke is on-going and the teams are committed to continuing this, further developing their service and working with other health boards and agencies to ensure the identification and care of stroke patients in NHS Ayrshire and Arran remains a priority for the health board.

Scottish Ambulance Service written submission, 10 December 2024

PE2048/O: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

Thank you for your invitation for Scottish Ambulance to provide a response to PE2048: review the FAST stroke awareness campaign and I hope our contribution is useful.

Firstly, I would like to recognise the loss experienced by the family of Anthony Bundy and on behalf of Scottish Ambulance Service I would like to extend my condolences. We appreciate the efforts of the family to increase awareness of the critical issue of strokes and timely treatment.

We are a clinically lead service and adjust our practice based on best practice and latest research, as outlined by others should the evidence supporting an alternative to FAST demonstrate better outcome we would adjust our practice accordingly.

Scottish Ambulance Service have not undertaken or participated in any pilot stroke awareness programmes at a local, regional, or national level and therefore have no outcomes to contribute. We will continue to publicise FAST awareness in line with nationally agreed messaging and promote awareness of key events such as World Stroke Day.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you need any further information.

NHS Orkney written submission, 23 December 2024

PE2048/P: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

NHS Orkney has not conducted any pilot studies for local awareness activities, and therefore cannot provide details on specific outcomes. However, NHS Orkney remains dedicated to raising public and patient awareness regarding the symptoms and risk factors associated with stroke.

NHS Orkney is supporting the National FAST Stroke Awareness campaign led by Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland (CHSS) which launched on 29th October 2024. NHS Orkney has promoted awareness of stroke symptoms through its social media channels over the year with some examples below.

- NHSO X – Jan 24 – Recognising Stroke Signs - <https://x.com/NHSOrkney/status/1746872749358723132/photo/1>
- NHSO X – Nov 24 – Reshare – CHSS – FAST campaign - <https://x.com/CHSSScotland/status/1851549642774781954>
- NHSO X – Nov 24 – Reshare – CHSS – FAST campaign - <https://x.com/CHSSScotland/status/1853361552717398498>
- NHSO X – Oct 24 – World Stroke Day - <https://x.com/NHSOrkney/status/1851194766157103345>
- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Dec 24 – Reshare – NHS24
- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Nov 24 – Reshare x 4 – CHSS – FAST campaign, each letter was shared in new post i.e., “F-A-S-T”
- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Nov 24 – Reshare – CHSS – FAST campaign
- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Oct 24 – World Stroke Day - NHS Orkney - World Stroke Day - We're excited to share that @CHSSScotland has launched their new FAST campaign to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of a stroke.
- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Sept 24 – Reshare – NHS UK – Stroke awareness

- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Feb 24 – Reshare – NHS24
- NHS Orkney | Facebook – Dec 23 – Identifying a stroke - NHS Orkney - Identifying a Stroke Using the FAST Method

Although the FAST campaign has been relatively effective, NHS Orkney is supportive of further work being done to strengthen messaging.

Petitioner written submission, 14 January 2025

PE2048/Q: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign

My family and I extend our sincere gratitude to the Citizen's Participation and Public Petitions Committee for their continued interest in our campaign to review Scotland's stroke Public Health Awareness strategy.

Since the committee last considered this petition, we have gathered further evidence that strengthens the case for a trial of the BE FAST acronym within a Scottish NHS Health Board.

Significant Adverse Event Report (SAER)

The Significant Adverse Event Report (SAER) conducted by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde following the sudden passing of my father, Anthony James Bundy, concluded that the use of the FAST acronym "directly contributed" to his death. The report also highlighted critical limitations of FAST, stating that it fails to identify up to 1 in 5 strokes—a figure that rises to nearly 50% in cases of Posterior Circulation Strokes³.

Additionally, the report noted that Scotland's thrombectomy services are not available on a 24/7 basis anywhere in the country, creating further barriers to optimal stroke care. This lack of comprehensive thrombectomy coverage is in direct conflict with the Scottish Government's goals to improve detection and hyperacute care for stroke patients⁴.

While the SAER raises concerns about a potential increase in false positives with the adoption of BE FAST, the panel of stroke consultants and researchers acknowledged there is "a role for consideration of the BE FAST tool" and that it could "halve the number of missed strokes."

It is important to emphasise that false positives—while a concern—should not outweigh the primary goal of ensuring that those suffering a stroke are identified and treated as quickly as possible. It is far preferable for individuals who are not having a stroke to seek medical attention unnecessarily than for stroke sufferers to avoid seeking help because their symptoms do not align with the limitations of the FAST acronym. BE FAST expands symptom recognition to include balance and vision disturbances, addressing key gaps in current awareness efforts.

Scottish Parliament Debate

³ 'Scottish Government should consider test for strokes, review finds', The Telegraph 31/12/2024

⁴ [Stroke Improvement Plan 2023](#), Scottish Government

[On Thursday, 21st November, motion S6M-15065 on increasing stroke awareness, brought forward by Roz McCall MSP, was debated in the Scottish Parliament Chamber.](#) This marked the first time that BE FAST was formally discussed in the Chamber.

The debate highlighted strong cross-party support for further exploration of BE FAST, including the possibility of conducting a pilot trial. Responding to the discussion, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care stated: “We do not plan to run trials of BE FAST in NHS boards. That is a decision for each board, but I keep that situation under review.”

This response underscored the importance of engaging with Scotland’s health boards to explore their views on piloting BE FAST. It also demonstrates the Government’s recognition of the importance of reviewing stroke awareness strategies, which aligns with its broader goals of improving primary prevention, detection, and hyperacute care for stroke patients.

Submissions from Health Boards to the Committee

Since the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee last considered PE2048, [several health boards have provided updates on their efforts to improve stroke symptom recognition.](#)

In particular, I would like to highlight the submission from NHS Ayrshire and Arran, which stated:

"The clinical and management teams met with Alan Gemmell MP and Lillian Jones MP on 25 October 2024 to share the improvements in the stroke service, including advancements in thrombectomy and the BE FAST initiative. This update was subsequently shared by Alan Gemmell in the UK Parliament. While we understand that further work is required before BE FAST can be fully adopted, the team at NHS Ayrshire and Arran would welcome the opportunity to act as a pilot site should this be agreed. One of our consultant staff has noted that BE FAST would likely address the symptoms highlighted in the petition, including balance, gait, and visual disturbances."

Given NHS Ayrshire and Arran’s willingness to pilot a BE FAST trial, we request that the Committee facilitate discussions between the Scottish Government and NHS Ayrshire and Arran to progress the implementation of such a trial. This would be a concrete step toward addressing the gaps identified in the SAER report and improving stroke care in Scotland.

Requests to the Committee

1. **Amplify the findings of the SAER report:** Highlight to the Scottish Government that the limitations of FAST, as identified by experts within Scotland’s NHS, necessitate further exploration of BE FAST.
2. **Facilitate discussions for a pilot trial:** Encourage the Scottish Government to engage with NHS Ayrshire and Arran regarding their readiness to conduct a BE FAST trial.

3. **Address thrombectomy service gaps:** Advocate for urgent improvements to ensure 24/7 thrombectomy services are available across Scotland, in line with Government targets for hyperacute care.
4. **Align BE FAST with broader stroke targets:** Emphasise how a BE FAST trial supports the Scottish Government's goals of improving primary prevention, detection, and hyperacute care.

Conclusion Summary

The SAER report into my father's death reveals critical flaws in Scotland's stroke awareness and care strategies that are costing lives. These findings – coupled with the Scottish Government's own stroke targets – present an opportunity to trial an expansion of FAST in the form of BE FAST. This trial has the potential to improve stroke detection rates, reduce healthcare inequality, and save lives.

The willingness of NHS Ayrshire and Arran to act as a pilot site provides a clear and actionable path forward. We urge the Committee to seize this opportunity by amplifying the findings of the SAER report, facilitating discussions for a BE FAST trial, and addressing the critical gaps in Scotland's thrombectomy services.

Improving stroke awareness and care aligns with the common good and Scotland's commitment to equitable healthcare. We must act now to ensure that no more lives are lost due to preventable delays in stroke recognition and treatment.

Thank you for your continued engagement with our campaign.