

To make heart screening a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Chwefror 2025
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Petition Number: P-06-1496

Petition title: To make heart screening a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms in Wales

Text of petition: Italy and other European countries have heart screening as a mandatory requirement for membership of sports clubs and gyms and we would like this to be imposed in Wales.

1. Background

Screening offers an opportunity to identify apparently healthy people who may be at increased risk of a disease or condition. [Public Health Wales](#) deliver a number of national screening programmes. Senedd Research have published an [article](#), which provides further information about the screening currently available in Wales.

Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD) is the sudden and unexpected death of a person caused by a problem with their heart. The causes in people under the age of 39



are often a thickening of the heart muscle or an electrical problem with the heart. In older people, SCD is more likely to be caused by a narrowing of the blood vessels that supply the heart (coronary heart disease).

Cardiac screening could identify heart conditions at an early stage, identify those at risk, and enable treatment to start earlier.

According to the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young, the European Society of Cardiology and International Olympic Committee recommend cardiac screening for any young person taking part in competitive sport. In Italy, screening participants in representative sports is mandatory.

1.1. Cardiac screening policy

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

UK NSC does not currently recommend systematic population screening of people under the age of 39 for cardiac conditions associated with SCD. The last review of this condition took place in 2019, and found that screening should not be offered for the following reasons:

- Most of the research is on testing of professional athletes, not the general population. So, the research might not provide a good indication of what they would find if all young people under the age of 39 were tested.
- The research on the tests did not report good accuracy. A high percentage of those receiving positive tests will not have a condition that may cause SCD. It was also not possible to estimate the percentage of people affected who may be missed by the test.
- The review did not find any research on effective treatments or interventions to prevent SCD in people identified as being at risk by the screening.
- An incorrect positive test may cause unnecessary anxiety and stop people participating in sporting activities.

UK NSC say that there is guidance on testing family members of people at risk of SCD and that “effective implementation of this guidance through a targeted screening programme may help prevent SCD in some groups of people who are at high risk.”

For older people, SCD is more likely to be caused by coronary heart disease. If a GP thinks a patient is at risk of coronary heart disease, they will carry out a risk assessment and a blood test, before referring for further tests to confirm the diagnosis.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government's response to this petition highlights that Ministers follow the "independent, expert advice" of the UK National Screening Committee.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care says that he will await the latest advice of the UK NSC and "consider any potential changes as soon as this becomes available."

The Welsh Government published the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Plan in 2017. This was followed by the launch of the Save a Life Cymru programme in 2019, which aims to improve survival rates in Wales following an out of hospital cardiac arrest by increasing provision and awareness of defibrillators and promoting CPR skills.

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Committee has previously considered two petitions on similar topics:

- P-06-1197 Heart screenings free for all 11-35 year olds who represent their school or county in sport
- P-06-1351 To bring in availability of heart-screening for all 11-35yr olds who play Sport

In both cases, the Committee noted the Welsh Government's strong emphasis on the importance of the UK NSC's guidance and agreed there was no scope to take the petition forward.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

