



**CALON HEART SCREENING AND  
DEFIBRILLATORS WALES**

*Sgrinio'r Galon a Diffibrilwyr*

**THE HEART CHARITY FOR WALES**

**ELUSEN Y GALON DROS GYRMU**

Charity No 1193404

**White House Cottage  
The Cathedral Green  
Llandaff  
Cardiff, CF5 2EB**

**Tel 0292 2402 670**

**Mob** [REDACTED]

**www.heartscreening.wales**

12<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Deputy Clerk  
Petitions Committee  
Welsh Parliament

Dear Deputy Clerk

**P-06-1197 – Heart Screening Programme / Calon Hearts**

Thank you for your email of 7<sup>th</sup> January, enclosing the letter from Eluned Morgan AS/MS, Minister for Health and Social Services, in response to our letter stating our case in support of the introduction of a heart-screening programme for all 11 to 35 yr olds in Wales who represent their school or county in sport.

In the Minister's letter, she reiterated what she said in her previous response and did not respond to the points we subsequently made.

Referring to those points, we dispute the Minister's conclusion to our petition by saying that "heart-screening should not be introduced as misleading screening results can have potentially damaging consequences for healthy athletes and their families as over-treatment and misdiagnosis which can follow athletes throughout their lives".

We would challenge this statement and other points made, on the following grounds:

- We reiterate: of 269 sudden deaths in young people, 49 occurred in competitive athletes with **undiagnosed heart conditions**.
- It is important to note that heart-screening has been compulsory in all teenagers and adults competing in athletic sports in Italy since 1982. Many other European countries offer similar cardiac screening, including France, Greece, Spain, Luxembourg, Sweden, Germany and Poland. Wales and the UK lacks sadly behind here. It would be good to see Wales taking the UK lead in this.
- Based on our current ECG heart-screening sessions, we found that 1 in 4 screenings revealed the need for further investigation with an Echo Cardiogram. Even accepting a percentage of false positives, we consider these odds are too high to ignore. Identifying the need for further investigation leads to long-term reassurance on minor issues which beats any short-term stress. More importantly, where it does reveal more worrying conditions, consider the alternative had it

not been picked up. To say that the small things might “haunt” an athlete through their lives is no consideration; it is clearly better to know.

- We are not saying that heart-screening should be compulsory for all, we are asking for it to be an option for young people who play sport.
- We would further challenge the Minister’s reasons for the dismissal of heart-screening to avoid anxiety, which would be similar as saying that, for instance, breast or bowel-screening would cause anxiety.
- All screening is subject to misdiagnosis and error, including breast screening, bowel screening, etc, including covid testing. This is no reason for not implementing.
- It is unlikely that a young sports-playing person, without any symptoms, would visit a GP and ask for heart-screening. In any case, it is not currently possible to have heart-screening from a GP on request, unless an individual has symptoms. However, it is likely that, were screening offered in a school, sports club or community centre, a young person would choose to be screened as a simple routine procedure.

In conclusion, whatever the source of advice, the Welsh Government has the responsibility for decisions on services and we urge the Minister and other members to take on board our concerns and reconsider an unwillingness either to challenge UK Screenings with those concerns and get a satisfactory answer, or to take them into consideration and weigh them against UK Screening advice. Please also note, the UK Screening advice is different in the case of young adults from that given for the whole population.

It would be good to see Wales taking the lead in the UK on this issue.

May we take this opportunity of thanking the Minister and other Members for their time in considering this matter. We look forward to and hope for a positive outcome.

Yours sincerely

*Sharon Owen*

**Sharon Owen**  
**Charity Director**