

PE1723/F

Scottish Government submission of 25 February 2020

Thank you for your letter of 17 January 2020 on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee regarding further questions in relation to Petition PE1723 - Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of essential tremor and to support the introduction and use of a focus ultrasound scanner for treating people in Scotland who have this condition.

In particular the committee have asked;

“if you could provide details of when treatment reimbursements will be available. If treatment reimbursement is delayed due to issues such as application approval by the National Specialist Services Committee we would be grateful if you could advise what work is being done to progress this so MRgFUS can be available as a treatment for Essential tremor as soon as possible.”

As highlighted in your original letter, the National Specialist Services Committee (NSSC) met on 4 December 2018 to consider a stage one application for specialist treatment of patients with Essential Tremor using MRI-guided focused ultrasound (MRgFUS). The application was unable to be endorsed as it was highlighted that the NICE guidance is ‘permissive’ and whilst there is some evidence for use of MRgFUS in essential tremor there is a clear statement that research is needed into its application for Parkinson’s Disease and MS tremor.

Following a fundraising exercise, I am aware that clinicians in Dundee are currently exploring the purchase of MRgFUS equipment and discussions are ongoing with NHS Scotland National Services Division regarding the development of a service. However, as yet no firm business plan has been presented.

Currently there is a single centre in the UK - at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London - offering this treatment to a small number of patients as part of a multinational study.

I understand that NHS England is developing a national clinical commissioning policy for MRgFUS for essential tremor. However, I am advised that no decisions have been taken (including about eligibility and reimbursement) and the treatment is not routinely available until a further evidence base is gathered through the work of the Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust London.

NHS Scotland National Services Division are continuing to engage with both the clinicians in Dundee and with commissioning colleagues in England to assess how this treatment might be made available to Scottish patients should it be proven effective with the required evidence base.

While we still await further research and evidence into its effectiveness, with the current evidence and the present stage of the planning and prioritisation processes, it is not possible at this time to indicate a timetable for the possible establishment of this as a routine service.

I would like to reiterate that the Scottish Government is committed to making sure all people living with neurological conditions in Scotland are able to access the best possible care and support, and benefit from healthcare services that are safe, effective and put people at the centre of their care.

That is why we have worked with the neurological community to produce Scotland's first ever National Action Plan on Neurological Conditions. We included the Plan in our Programme for Government; a sign of our commitment to this agenda.

The vision is that everyone with a neurological condition will be able to access the care and support they need to live well, on their own terms. These aims include improving the co-ordination of services and ensuring high standards of person-centred care.

I hope this reply is helpful to the petitioner and the PPC.