

PE1723/M

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport submission of 11 February 2021

Thank you for your letter dated the 18th of December 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 advise whether the Scottish Government’s decision on funding MRgFUS will be reviewed following NHS England’s decision to fund the procedure”.

I note NHS England’s recent national clinical commissioning policy decision to provide MRgFUS treatment for up to 150 patients per annum. I can confirm that the position in Scotland remains largely unchanged to that highlighted by my officials in their earlier response of 25 February 2020.

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. Currently, in light of COVID-19, new applications through National Specialist Services Committee (NSSC) are paused.

At the time when the original application for designation for a MRgFUS service was put to NSSC it was feedback that there was a lack of evidence on the proven effectiveness of the treatment and further research was required in order to approve the application for stage 2. I appreciate further evidence has emerged since this time and forms part of NHS England’s national clinical position. However it was noted at that point that providing a small service is not wholly dependent on National Designation through the National Specialist Services Committee.

Following a fundraising exercise, I am aware that clinicians in Dundee have charitable funding in place to begin initially treating 1 patient on a trial basis for 6 months. Along with the evidence from the NHS England clinical position, this will contribute to further advancing the evidence base on MRgFUS effectiveness for treating essential tremor and all of this will be looked at as part of a fresh application to NSSC when it is possible.

I would like to reiterate that the Scottish Government remains committed to making sure all people living with neurological conditions in Scotland such as essential tremor, 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.

I will be happy to update the Public Petitions Committee when a further update on the service is available.