

# **PE2048/BB: Review the FAST stroke awareness campaign**

## **Petitioner written submission, 8 December 2025**

As this parliamentary session draws to a close, this hearing may represent the final opportunity for my family's petition to be considered before dissolution.

I believe the evidence that has emerged via this committee's hearings has shown us that Scotland's stroke system is at a critical juncture, and we cannot afford inaction. Effective public health campaigns have the power to save lives, but if, and only if, life-saving treatments are universally accessible.

During the committee's deliberations, a wide range of views has emerged regarding a potential BE FAST campaign. Fergus Ewing MSP, in his remarks, correctly dismissed concerns that Scots would struggle to remember an additional two letters in a public health campaign.

The more serious issue, however, remains the balance between false positives and false negatives in stroke detection. From a public health perspective, the consequences of false negatives are catastrophic. Being suspected of having a stroke and later reassured you are not is far preferable, I believe, to being dismissed when a stroke is occurring, a reality tragically illustrated by my father's death, which motivates this campaign.

Campaigns such as BE FAST empower Scots with knowledge that can save lives.

Beyond public awareness, evidence presented to the committee has highlighted critical gaps in Scotland's stroke care:

- The absence of 24/7 thrombectomy services anywhere in Scotland.
- Continued reliance on FAST by medical professionals in diagnosing stroke, despite evidence that FAST can fail to identify up to one in five strokes.

These shortcomings demonstrate that urgent reform is required, both in the public's ability to recognise stroke symptoms and in the clinical infrastructure to respond effectively.

### ***Recommendations***

Considering this evidence, I respectfully ask the Committee to consider the following actions:

1. **24/7 Thrombectomy Service:** Recommend that the Scottish Government commit to delivering a nationwide, 24/7 thrombectomy service within the lifetime of the next Parliament, a timetable that is feasible and generous. Without universal access to this life-saving treatment, the principle of an NHS free at the point of need is compromised.
2. **BE FAST Evidence in Clinical Use:** Request that the Health, Social Care, and Sport Committee continue to examine evidence on the use of BE FAST

as a diagnostic tool in emergency departments, using data from NHS Forth Valley and other relevant sources to compare BE FAST with FAST.

3. **Parliamentary Debate on Public Health Campaigns:** Advocate for a full debate in the Chamber on the role of public health campaigns, specifically addressing the trade-off between false positives and false negatives and the best ways to engage the public with life-saving information.

In conclusion, this petition is about more than an acronym, it is about ensuring that Scots are empowered with knowledge that can save lives and that life-saving treatment is always available.

Parliament can act decisively, to protect the most vulnerable, and to uphold the founding principles of our NHS.

It is a moral and practical imperative that we seize this opportunity before the session ends.