

PE2062/G: Introduce a National Screening Programme for Prostate Cancer

First Minister written submission, 16 February 2026

Thank you for your correspondence, dated 2 February on behalf of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee.

As you recognise in your correspondence, the Scottish Government takes advice from the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC), the independent expert advisory group that informs screening policy across the UK, regarding national screening programmes.

The UK NSC's consultation is a welcome step forward, though I acknowledge it does not go as far as to consider a recommendation for prostate cancer screening at a population level. I am sympathetic to the calls from campaigners to see national screening explored seriously in Scotland. It is, however, essential that we are driven by the evidence on this matter. In this context, Cancer Research UK have written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care confirming that they are in agreement with the judgement made by the UK NSC and stressing that further evidence is required to make positive recommendations.

Should the UK NSC recommend the introduction of targeted prostate screening following its consultation, the organisations that oversee screening will advise us on how to take that recommendation forward. In Scotland, as in all nations of the UK, screening policy is underpinned by the UK NSC's recommendations. The Scottish Government will monitor the on-going consultation process carefully.

As you state in your letter, on 8 August 2025 the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and I held roundtable on Prostate Cancer. Sir Chris Hoy was a guest of honour at this event. Other attendees included leading experts, charities and those with lived experience of prostate cancer. The aim of the event was to discuss how to better raise awareness and understanding of prostate cancer.

The following were taken as actions for this event:

- The Scottish Government will encourage Health Boards to sign up to the TRANSFORM trial.
- The Scottish Government will continue to consider recommendations from the UK National Screening Committee and take appropriate action should recommendations change.
- The Scottish Government will continue to consider how to reach those at a higher risk of developing prostate cancer and continue to take actions to improve diagnosis and care pathways in Scotland.

Following the roundtable, The Cabinet Secretary and I commissioned the Chief Medical Officer to establish an expert led Short Life Working Group (SLWG) on prostate cancer. The group has the following remit:

1. Living well with prostate cancer
2. Health professional awareness of prostate cancer guidelines
3. Preparedness for future NSC advice on prostate cancer

This SLWG met for the first time in December and will meet again March 2026. The Chief Medical Officer will advise the Cabinet Secretary and I of the group's output and findings following the group's final meeting later this year.

You also reference the publication of our revised Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspicion of Cancer. This took place in August 2025. For this first time, these guidelines identify key groups who should consider speaking to their GP about PSA testing from age 45. These are:

- Men with a family history of prostate cancer,
- Black men, who are around three times more likely to develop prostate cancer than white men, and may develop it up to five years earlier,
- and those with a genetic predisposition, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations.

The guidelines now also explicitly reference the prostate cancer risk management pathway, noting that GPs should have an informed conversation with anyone - regardless of age- who expresses concern about prostate cancer.

It may also interest the Committee to note that The Scottish Cancer Network published a [clinical management pathway on prostate cancer](#) in July 2025.

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