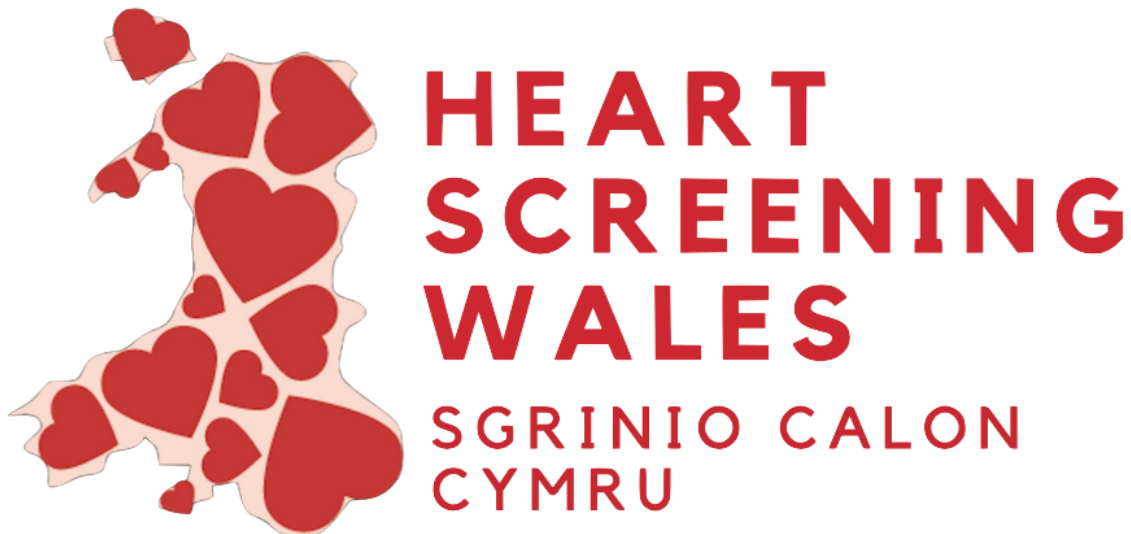


PETITION No. P-05-870

LET'S GET EVERY YOUNG HEART SCREENED (age 10 -35)

To roll out a heart screening programme to people between the ages of 10 – 35 years in Wales

SUPPORTIVE EVIDENCE submitted by Welsh Hearts



Heart screening saves lives

Identifying risk factors can only be a good thing, for those that are found to have any kind of problem. It may be that a follow up trip to the GP can deal with the matter, some may not need immediate treatment but will have regular checkups to be monitored, but for those that need further investigation they can be treated as necessary, with some cases being very serious, potentially threatening. Heart screening saves lives.

The fact that some issues may never develop into severe conditions is not a worthy reasoning for not doing screening for the masses. People die from undiagnosed heart conditions. It is a tragic fact that 12 young people a week die of undiagnosed heart problems.

Heart screening can identify a number of heart issues. The sooner a major problem is identified, the better chance the patient has. Many diagnosed heart patients do not die, but do have severe health problems, limited lifestyles, take significant quantities of medication and have many hospital appointments, admissions and surgeries. For many, the earlier diagnosis, means far less time in hospital care, far less limiting of their lifestyle and few deaths because it has been found before getting worse.

Vaughan Gething's letter dated 6th March 2019, states 'there are uncertainties about the overall benefits of identifying people with risk factors' – the 'benefits' are, that lives are saved.

When any abnormality is identified during screening, it needs to be looked at further.

Mr Gething also stating that if someone is wrongly identified, which is a negligible number, it can cause anxiety, but, their concerns can be easily alleviated by their GP or at the hospital and from all the people we at Welsh Hearts have spoken to, they all say they would prefer to know, so the issue can be dealt with.

For Mr Gethin to say a person might become 'anxious about their physical activity and stop exercising regularly, which could have a negative effect on their overall health', is not the case. Quite the opposite in fact. People who are flagged as having a potential problem, who are then told they are one of the lucky ones and do not need treatment, are elated and go out and live life to the full.

Welsh Hearts carry out screening at schools across Wales and for every school attended, at least one child has been identified as having some kind of heart issue. This may be something which has not even needed treatment, but it may have be something serious. Heart screening saves lives.

We at Welsh Hearts have firsthand knowledge and experience of undiagnosed heart issues, along with contacts who have severe heart defects and also, tragically we speak to families who have lost youngsters from undiagnosed heart issues.

Welsh Hearts have screened over 3000 young hearts since 2015, with hundreds being referred into further investigation.

Welsh Hearts have picked up some very serious heart conditions, such as Brugada, hole in the heart and cardiomyopathy.

At a recent screening at The Principality Stadium, 104 people were screened, with 3 serious heart conditions picked up.

There are 8000 cardiac arrests outside hospital in Wales, every year with only a 3% survival rate.

Hundreds of people die each year from undiagnosed heart conditions.

Population of Wales: 3.2 million people (from statswales)
Population proposed for screening (10-35): approx. 30% population
(from statswales) = 969k people

Most common cause of hereditary cardiomyopathy is Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) - prevalence approx. 0.1-0.2% = 2000 people in Wales

Other screening programs (info from CRY) have an abnormality pick-up of 1% (includes other hereditary cardiomyopathies, structural cardiac disease, and premature acquired cardiac disease) = 9.7k people

Most of these cardiac conditions are either associated with premature death or morbidity and furthermore if detected early by a screening program intervention will substantially reduce mortality and morbidity. Given that these conditions affect the young there is the potential for a lifetime of loss of earnings and tax for inland revenue, together with the potential for a lifetime of social care and healthcare costs. If identified early these individuals are also less likely to burden A&E and already overstretch unscheduled care services.

Also shouldn't ignore the importance of a normal screen for the 'worried well'. A normal screen for these people gives them confidence to continue to lead a full and active life and not be afraid to exercise.

Competitive sport: The European Society of Cardiology recommend, that all children over 12 years old and all adults undertaking competitive sport should undergo sports cardiology screening every 2 years. Competitive sport is defined as any sport that involves competition or regular training (European Heart Journal (2005) 26, 516–524). Wales has a heritage of supporting rugby and football and the children and young people playing club sport should be protected by a national screening program.

Welsh Hearts have recently joined forces with the Welsh Sports Association.

CEO Victoria Ward said:

'The collaboration with Welsh Hearts is a great opportunity to raise the profile of screening services and insure that screening is accessible and affordable to all athletes in the future. The screening sessions being offered are quick and painless, so we would encourage all our members to spread the word amongst their athletes and help us to improve heart health awareness across Wales.'

A recent tragic example of a young man who died as he finished the Cardiff Half Marathon, only serves to show that if screening was in place across Wales, his heart problem may well have been picked up early and he could have received treatment and his family would have been saved such avoidable tragedy.

Heart screening saves lives

Hundreds die each year from an undiagnosed heart condition – that's hundreds too many. A simple ECG (electrocardiogram) will identify most cardiac abnormalities so that conditions can be managed.

Welsh Hearts are pleased to be funding such a vital and life saving initiative. It is our mission to help protect and promote the heart health of young people here in Wales. Many people still associate heart disease and heart attacks with older people, however this is sadly not the case. But with screening we can make a massive difference and we will save lives.



“This is a great initiative from Welsh Hearts that will hopefully prevent lives being lost from undiagnosed heart conditions.

“I’ve worked closely with Welsh Hearts for a number of years and they do a fantastic job in raising the awareness of heart conditions as well as screening across Wales.”

Sam Warburton

We call on the National Assembly for Wales to ask the Welsh Government to roll out a heart screening programme to all young people between 10 and 35 in Wales. Hundreds die each year in Wales from an undiagnosed heart condition and a simple ECG will identify most cardiac abnormalities so that conditions can be managed effectively.

Heart screening sessions involve a short 5-10-minute test which is quick and painless and able to detect most heart abnormalities and could save hundreds of lives in Wales. In the Veneto region of Italy, where heart screening programme has been undertaken for 25 years the number of young athletes, male and female, dying of sudden cardiac arrest fell from one in 28,000 each year to one in 250,000, according to a 2006 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.