

Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department Of Health And Social Care
39 Victoria Street
Westminster, London
SW1H 0EU

September 2024

Dear Mr Streeting,

Congratulations on your recent re-election and your appointment as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. We are writing on behalf of Bolt Burdon Kemp LLP and CESCO regarding the implementation of the GIRFT (Getting it Right First Time) National Suspected Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) Pathway.

As you may know, CES is a spinal surgical emergency that can lead to lower limb paralysis and loss of bowel, bladder and sexual function. Cauda Equina Syndrome requires immediate medical attention to prevent permanent damage. Early diagnosis and treatment are crucial for a better outcome. Not only are the impacts of CES devastating for the individual but failure to identify and treat CES is also costing the NHS millions each year in both treatment of more serious cases but also compensation claims.

At the end of 2023, we submitted Freedom of Information Requests to Trusts across NHS England. The responses we received have confirmed our concerns that, despite being launched over a year ago, the vast majority of Trusts have still not implemented the GIRFT pathway.

Out of the responses we received, just 20% of Trusts had implemented the pathway, 18% had not yet but planned to do so in the future and 62% had not implemented the pathway nor did they plan to.

Of those who responded, almost 40% specifically highlighted the lack of 24-hour access to MRI machines as a reason that they could not implement this pathway as well as cost and resourcing pressures.

We are asking that you:

1. Write to all NHS Trusts to request they implement the pathway.
2. Provide financial support for those Trusts that do not yet have the resources to provide 24-hour MRI support.
3. Meet with us to discuss the importance of the pathway and other challenges facing this community.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

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