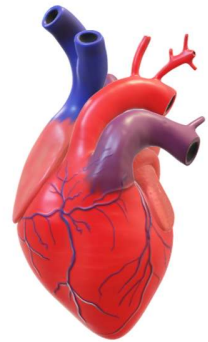


## The SAFER Trial – Screening for Atrial Fibrillation with ECG to Reduce stroke

A big **thank you** for taking part in the SAFER Trial, a research trial about screening for **atrial fibrillation** (AF) to reduce the risk of stroke. The trial is aiming to find out if implementing a national screening programme for AF is possible, will prevent strokes and is good value for money for the NHS

AF is a heart rhythm issue where your heartbeat is not regular. It is more common as we get older and is a major risk factor for stroke, responsible for approximately 1 in 5 strokes, but this risk can be significantly reduced with anticoagulation therapy.



### Trial design



Patients were aged 70 years and over and not on anticoagulants at the time they enrolled in the trial.

Following randomisation, participants went into one of two groups, the control group or the intervention group:

- 2 thirds of participants were randomly allocated to the control group and received usual care.
- 1 third of participants were randomly allocated to the intervention group and were invited to screening for AF using a hand-held single lead ECG device posted to participants, and used for three weeks (4x per day).



**All trial participants are followed up via relevant electronic health registries and GP records for the duration of the trial.**



*Participants who accepted the screening invitation received the Zenicor handheld ECG device to use at home 4 times a day for 3 weeks.*

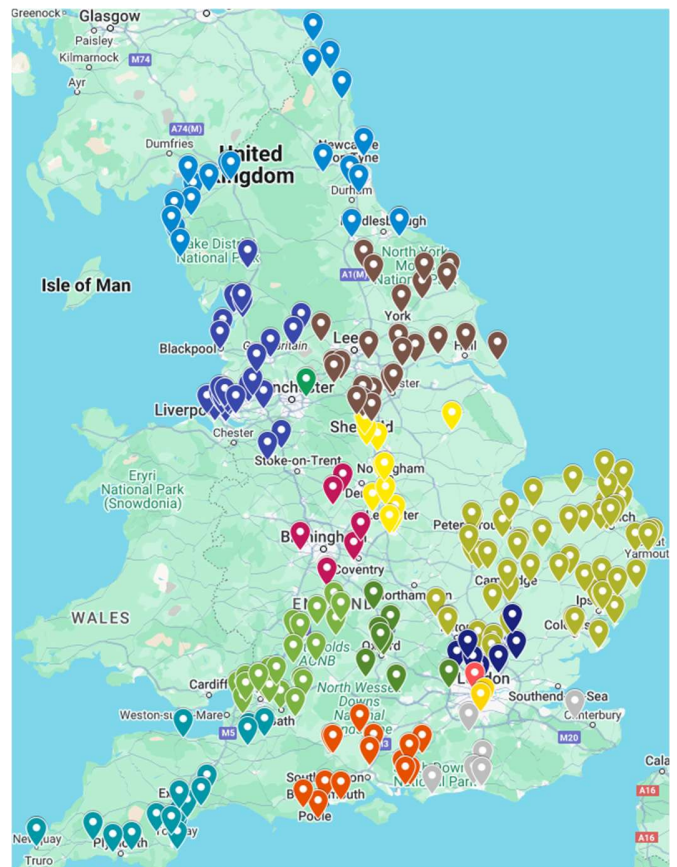
## Recruitment

We recruited a total of 236  
GP practices  
across England.

*Can you spot your GP  
practice on this map?*

The SAFER Trial has completed  
recruitment, with over 89,000 participants  
randomised, and AF screening in over 23,000  
participants. This makes it the largest  
randomised controlled trial of screening for  
AF.

- The number of participants recruited per GP practice ranged between **34 – 2,037**.
- The patient consent rate ranged between **10.8% and 46.1%** per practice.
- All screening results have been returned to GP practices.



## What happens next?

The trial is now in the follow-up period and will continue to collect relevant electronic health data on participants until early **2028**. The data will then be analysed to answer the aims of the trial.



## Trial results

When the final results are published in 2028 we will send a summary to the practice.

In the meantime, please visit website <https://www.safer.phpc.cam.ac.uk/> to keep updated with any trial news and publications.

## Some other news from the SAFER Programme

- [SAFER-AUS](#) – The trial is also being replicated by our collaborators in Australia, at the University of Sydney.



- The SAFER team have been running a sub study to investigate the environmental impact and sustainability of screening, testing rechargeable batteries in the ECG device.
- One of our researchers, in conjunction with the NHS, is using the remote model developed by SAFER to implement a pathway to investigate palpitations. This is with the aim of reducing the burden on primary care.

## Feedback

“I’ve had really lovely feedback from patients who have taken part in SAFER [...] **they are all saying how straightforward the device is and how much they have enjoyed taking part** – all unprompted! The lady I have just come off the phone with told me she thought the study was ‘absolutely marvelous!’”

Research Nurse

*I was delighted...I’d been having problems with breathing etc., having tests and things. And when I took part in this, I hoped it would show up something. It’s shown up that I’ve got **Atrial Fibrillation**, never been discovered before. That’s the plus as far as I’m concerned.*

Study Participant

## Thank you!

Finally, all of us on the SAFER team want to **thank you** again for your invaluable contributions to the SAFER trial. We cannot do our research without the help of GP practices and the participants who volunteer to take part, and we very much appreciate the effort it takes to conduct research alongside running a busy GP practice.