

# Health and Social Care Secretary to launch new 10-year 'national war on cancer'

- A new call for evidence to inform an ambitious 10-Year Cancer Plan to make the country's cancer care system the 'best in Europe'
- As the NHS tackles the COVID-19 backlog, renewed focus will be placed on innovative cancer treatment and early diagnosis as part of a national war on cancer
- Cancer remains the biggest cause of death from disease in the UK and the COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious effect on care and services, with people not coming forward for checks

In a speech at the Francis Crick Institute, Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid will today (4 February) "declare a war on cancer" and launch a call for evidence to underpin an ambitious 10-Year Cancer Plan for England.

The Health and Social Care Secretary will set out his vision to make England a world-leader in cancer care as we learn to live COVID-19 – with renewed attention paid to innovative treatment and early diagnosis to radically improve outcomes for cancer patients.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid is expected to say:

Let this be the day where we declare a national war on cancer. We have published the call for evidence for a new 10 Year Cancer Plan for England, a searching new vision for how we will lead the world in cancer care.

This Plan will show how we are learning the lessons from the pandemic, and apply them to improving cancer services over the next decade.

It will take a far-reaching look at how we want cancer care to be in 2032 – ten years from now. Looking at all stages, from prevention, to diagnosis, to treatment and vaccines.

We want to hear views from far and wide to help us shape this work. Please join us in this effort, so fewer people face the heartache of losing a loved one to this wretched disease.

Huge strides in cancer care have been made in recent years – in the last 15

years, one-year survival has increased by more than 10% and for patients diagnosed in 2015, their survival rate was 72% after one year.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact. While dedicated NHS staff ensured cancer treatment was maintained at 94% of pre-pandemic levels and 95% of people starting treatment did so within a month, there were nearly 50,000 fewer cancer diagnoses across the UK during the pandemic, including 34,000 in England (March 2020 to November 2021).

The Health and Social Care Secretary will today set out his determination to go further, building on the progress of the NHS Long Term Plan with a set of new and strengthened priorities, which include:

- increasing the number of people diagnosed at an early stage, where treatment can prove much more effective;
- boosting the cancer workforce;
- tackling disparities and inequalities, including in cancer diagnosis times and ensuring recovery from the pandemic is delivered in a fair way. For instance, the 'Help Us Help You' cancer awareness campaign will be directed towards people from more deprived groups and ethnic minorities; and
- intensifying research on mRNA vaccines and therapeutics for cancer – this will be achieved through the UK's global leadership and supporting industry to develop new cancer treatments by combining expertise in cancer immunotherapy treatment and the vaccine capabilities developed throughout the pandemic.
- intensifying research on new early diagnostic tools to catch cancer at an earlier stage.
- improving prevention of cancer through tackling the big known risk factors such as smoking.

Minister for Primary Care Maria Caulfield, said:

Half of us will have cancer at some point in our lives, and many more will have to support someone close to them who has it.

We want to have the best cancer care in Europe and this call to evidence will help us develop a plan to achieve this. We want to hear from you – cancer patients, relatives and NHS staff – to see how we can best move forward to deliver better care and treatment.

Cally Palmer, National Cancer Director for the NHS, said:

The NHS is committed to saving more lives from cancer by finding more cases at an earlier stage when they are easier to treat in line with our ambitions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan – it is this action that will ultimately help us to save thousands of lives sadly lost to cancer every year.

Despite the pandemic and thanks to the huge efforts of our staff, cancer services have remained a priority with well over two million checks in the last year alone and tens of thousands of people starting lifesaving treatment every month.

From one stop shops for vital checks and revolutionary treatment options like proton beam therapy – we will continue to go further and faster in our mission to save more lives and ensure England is world leading in cancer care.

A key part of the strategy will be building on the latest scientific advances and partnering with the country's technology pioneers. The NHS-Galleri trial is evaluating a new test that looks for distinct markers in blood to identify cancer risk and has already shown how technology can transform the way cancer is detected. The test is being trialled across England, with thousands of people already recruited.

The government wants similar technologies to help form new partnerships and give the NHS early, cost effective access to new diagnostics. Artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies, for example, have the potential to help the health service radically improve its assessment of cancer risk.

The government is already investing billions to tackle the COVID-19 backlog, diagnostics and technology over the next three years to provide earlier diagnosis and treatment. It is also aiming to build a world class cancer workforce to help the NHS' recovery by developing new roles along with training and upskilling the current workforce.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government focused on recovering services that had been hit hardest. This included the rollout of nearly 160 Faster Diagnosis Pathways (previously known as Rapid Diagnostic Centres), which aim to speed up diagnosis for cancer without the need for repeat diagnostic checks, and ensure patients with worrying symptoms can be quickly assessed by a GP. By 2024, the programme will be available across England for patients who display symptoms that could indicate cancer but don't align to specific cancers, such as unexplained weight loss, fatigue or vague abdominal pain.

The government has also invested £2.3 billion to roll out Community Diagnostic Centres, which offer patients rapid access to clinical tests and life-saving checks close to their home. In their first full year of operation, they will deliver up to 2.8 million scans. By 2025, the NHS will be able to carry out 4.5 million additional scans. This will also help reduce waiting times by diverting patients away from hospitals, allowing them to treat urgent patients, while the Community Diagnostic Centres focus on tackling the COVID-19 backlog.

During the Omicron wave, the government struck a deal with the independent sector to create new wards and Nightingale hubs in gyms and education centres, giving NHS Trusts more treatment options for cancer patients.

Last year, the government offered free lung health checks at 23 locations across the country – with a further 20 new centres confirmed for 2022/23. The Faster Diagnosis Standard – 28 days from GP referral to diagnosis or all-clear – has also been implemented within NHS Trusts.

Today's new call for evidence is seeking input from cancer patients, relatives and NHS staff to gain the deepest understanding of the issue possible and provide the best future for the country's cancer care. The easiest way to participate is by visiting [gov.uk/dhsc](https://www.gov.uk/dhsc).

The call for evidence will run for 8 weeks, after which the government will factor in responses into its new 10-Year Cancer Plan which is expected to be set out in summer.

## **Background**

- Participants can respond to the call for evidence as an individual, or on behalf of an organisation. It closes at 11:45pm on 1 April 2022.
- The Health and Social Care Secretary's speech will be available to view via video link on the DHSC twitter channel, pending approval from the social media team.
- The Long Term Plan was originally published in January 2019 and included several ambitions on cancer.