

Prime Minister pledges funding for cancer screening overhaul

The equipment will improve the quality of screening and speed of diagnosis, with clinicians finding the machines more effective and easier to use.

Other benefits include:

- lower radiation levels, which will improve patient safety – newer CT scanners have a dosage reduction of 80 to 90%
- improved reliability, meaning better use of staffing resource with fewer cancellations
- different types of scans, which will enable more patients to be seen using less equipment
- the machines will be artificial intelligence (AI) enabled, to ensure they are AI ready when an update is available

The £200 million of new funding is part of the government's commitment to ensure 55,000 more people survive cancer each year.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan, the government committed to diagnosing three-quarters of cancers at an early stage by 2028 through improved screening processes.

Additional, newer CT scanners will help identify cancers more quickly. They will also pick up a range of other health conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and help reduce inequalities in cancer outcomes.

This will have a dramatic effect on survival rates – as patients diagnosed at stages 1 or 2 have the best chance of long-term survival.

To support earlier diagnosis, the NHS is also introducing rapid diagnostic and assessment centres, helping to detect cancer in people with a range of symptoms like unexplained weight loss and abdominal pain.

Allocation of the new machines will be based on an assessment of local infrastructure and local population need, and the funding will be split across 2 years.

NHS frontline funding is one of the Prime Minister's priorities. The government has already committed an extra £2 billion, including to upgrade 20 hospitals across the country and for new equipment and AI research.

The government has also recently announced that another £210 million will be invested in frontline staff, including a personal training budget of £1,000 for every nurse. This is on top of the extra £33.9 billion every year to be invested in the health service by 2023 to 2024.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

“The NHS is the best healthcare service in the world, and the treatment and care it provides is one reason cancer survival rates are at a record high.

“But too many lives are still being lost to this shattering illness. We can, must, and will do so much more for sufferers and their families.

“These new scanners will lead to quicker diagnosis, more screenings, and improved care for patients, giving brilliant NHS staff the tools they need to further boost survival rates.

“It’s my priority to make sure our NHS gets every penny it needs to provide the very best care – wherever you live, and whatever your condition.”

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

“I want to see the way we fight cancer in the NHS transformed, so we can confront this cruel disease with the best facilities to give our family, friends and colleagues the greatest chance.

“I’m determined to get cutting-edge equipment into hospitals across the country so that clinical staff are equipped with the best technology available for patients.

“This will be the first step in reaching our ambition through the NHS Long Term Plan of becoming a global leader in cancer diagnosis, saving the lives of tens of thousands more people each year.”