

How can the 2019 Spending Review deliver for cancer patients?

This September, when the Chancellor sets out the Government’s spending plans, cancer patients, prevention and research should be at the top of his priority list.



The NHS Long-Term Plan sets out an ambitious vision for the future of cancer care. With the commitment to diagnose 75% of cancers early by 2028, we have the potential to drive up the UK’s cancer survival to be among the best in the world. Recent increases in NHS funding will help deliver on this, but without support for the wider health system at the Spending Review, this investment will be undermined, the ambitions of the Long-Term Plan will not be realised, and the UK will continue to lag behind comparable countries when it comes to cancer survival.

If we are to deliver the best outcomes for cancer patients, the 2019 Spending Review must include:

1) Investment in staff training and planning to ensure we have an NHS cancer workforce fit for the future

Right now, more than 1 in 10 diagnostic posts are unfilled and thousands more staff will be needed in the future. By 2035 there will be over half a million new cancer cases each year in the UK, equivalent to more than one new case a minute. Without investment in medical education and workforce planning, we won’t have the frontline staff and specialists needed to cope with future demand – let alone diagnose and treat more cancers at an early stage.

2) Sustainable funding for public health so local authorities can deliver evidence-based stop smoking services

With 4 in 10 cancers considered preventable, the opportunity to reduce smoking must be a priority in achieving a healthy and happy nation. However, following reductions to the Public Health Grant in 2015, locally run stop smoking services were cut year-on-year. Addressing local health needs is one of the best ways to reduce cancer and help those areas that have been left behind. We would like to see reinvestment in public health, alongside the introduction of a 'polluter pays' approach with a charge on tobacco companies used to fund high impact measures to help people to quit smoking, such as local stop smoking services.

3) A renewed commitment to invest 2.4% of GDP in Research & Development, including increased funding for health research to drive improvements for patients

It's thanks to research that cancer survival in the UK has doubled since the 1970s and our ambition is to accelerate this progress. Over the next few decades, we have the potential to deliver significant breakthroughs in early detection research and lead the world in our use of data. But to do this, we need long-term investment in science and research, particularly increased investment in clinical research through the National Institute for Health Research.

