

# Improving cancer services, saving lives in Scotland



## Cancer Research UK's manifesto calls for the 2021 election

- Commit to a new cancer strategy to transform services and improve outcomes
- Tackle socio-economic inequalities in cancer
- Scale Down Cancer with legislation to restrict price promotions on junk food
- Take action to ensure Scotland meets its smoke free target
- Set out plans to ensure Scotland has a cancer workforce fit for the future
- Take action to protect and support medical research

## Deliver a vision for the future of cancer services

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Scotland, with more than 16,000 people dying of cancer every year.<sup>1</sup> Over 32,000 people are diagnosed with cancer each year<sup>2</sup> – 4 people every hour – and this is set to rise to 40,000 by 2035.<sup>3</sup> Cancer hasn't stopped during COVID-19 and NHS staff have worked exceptionally hard to keep urgent services running while responding to the outbreak. The impact of COVID-19 on cancer services in Scotland has been significant, as it has across the UK. Thousands have missed out on screening, and serious delays in people getting a cancer diagnosis and treatment has left a backlog that will take significant efforts to address.



The Scottish Government's national cancer recovery plan contains important actions to restore and improve cancer services over the next two years. This needs to be implemented in full to ensure services get back on track. We must also look beyond recovery and consider how to truly transform cancer outcomes in Scotland and save more lives.

**Cancer is something that affects us all. We are calling on all candidates standing for election to the Scottish Parliament to support our manifesto asks on behalf of people affected by cancer and those that care for and support them. The next Scottish Government should work towards an ambitious new cancer strategy to ensure cancer services are fit for the future. This should contain a range of clear and measurable targets to improve cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment and be funded over a five-year period to drive change. No matter what part of Scotland they live in, cancer patients deserve better outcomes.**

# 4 in 10 cancer cases in Scotland can be prevented...



●●● Larger circles indicate more Scotland cancer cases

Circle size here is not relative to other infographics based on Brown et al 2018.

Source: Brown et al, British Journal of Cancer, 2018

[cruk.org/prevention](http://cruk.org/prevention)  
Together we will beat cancer



CANCER  
RESEARCH  
UK

## Tackle socio-economic inequalities in cancer

Over 40% of cancers diagnosed in Scotland are linked to lifestyle and environmental factors including smoking, obesity and alcohol consumption.<sup>7</sup> Many cancers could be prevented through targeted action to reduce these risk factors and enable everyone in Scotland to enjoy healthier lives. This would aid the financial sustainability of NHS cancer services, by reducing cancer cases through preventative measures that are likely to be more cost-effective than delivering cancer treatments.

Taking action to reduce risk factors will also help to address the significant cancer inequalities between Scotland's poorer and wealthier communities. Levels of smoking<sup>8</sup> and overweight and obesity<sup>9</sup> are significantly higher in more deprived areas. For all cancers combined, the most deprived areas have much higher rates of incidence (32%) and mortality (74%) than the least deprived.<sup>10</sup>

**The next Scottish Government should investigate why this variation exists, how it impacts patient outcomes and what actions are needed to effectively tackle it.**

## Scale Down Cancer by targeting junk food

Overweight and obesity is the second biggest preventable cause of cancer in Scotland after smoking. Excess weight is responsible for 2,200 cancer cases in Scotland annually.<sup>11</sup> Limited progress has been made in efforts to reduce the rate of overweight and obesity in Scotland's adult population (currently 63%).<sup>12</sup>

Changing Scotland's obesogenic food environment is an essential step towards better public health. In 2018 we achieved cross party support for the need for action to restrict price promotion, followed by a Programme for Government commitment in 2019. Implementing this will help to promote healthier choices and reduce the prevalence of excess weight, which is linked to 13 types of cancer.

**The next Scottish Government should prioritise the introduction of new legislation to restrict price promotions on junk foods which are high in fat, sugar in salt and provide minimal nutritional value.**

## Prevent cancers by achieving a smoke-free Scotland

Smoking is the biggest preventable cause of cancer in Scotland and is responsible for over 5,700 cases of cancer each year.<sup>13</sup> Progress has been made in reducing adult smoking rates, but Scotland is not on course to meet its smoke-free target of having no more than 5% of the adult population smoking by 2034. At current rates, this will only be achieved in the least deprived section of the population and the target won't be met nationally until after 2050.

**Urgent action from the next Scottish Government is needed to get back on track by doubling the rate at which smoking prevalence will drop in the years ahead. This includes evaluating the 2018 Tobacco Control Action Plan to prioritise interventions that will help Scotland reach a smoke-free generation more quickly. The next Scottish Government should also increase funding for national mass media campaigns to reduce uptake and encourage smokers to quit.**

## Develop a sustainable approach to workforce

Patients diagnosed at an early stage are more likely to survive cancer. For example, data from England has shown that 9 in 10 bowel cancer patients diagnosed at the earliest stage will survive for five years, compared to around 1 in 10 diagnosed at the latest stage.<sup>14</sup> Longstanding staff shortages in Scotland's cancer workforce have limited the progress made in early diagnosis and survival. A comprehensive approach to training, recruitment and retention can deliver a cancer workforce with the number and type of staff required to ensure every patient receives timely diagnosis and treatment. Reviewing the provision and condition of equipment for at a national level can help in planning its long-term renewal.

**The next Scottish Government should develop a cancer workforce plan and invest in the staff and kit needed to meet the demand for services in the next 10-15 years.**

## THERE AREN'T ENOUGH NHS STAFF TO DIAGNOSE CANCER EARLY

### REFERRED PATIENTS

More patients  
referred as more  
tests are needed  
to diagnose  
cancer earlier

### NHS DIAGNOSTIC STAFF

ACCESS  
TO NHS  
DIAGNOSTIC  
SERVICES

LET'S BEAT CANCER SOONER



## Take action to protect and support medical research

Research is crucial in developing our understanding of preventing, managing and treating cancer, and has been at the heart of Scotland's improving cancer survival rates for many years. Evidence suggests that clinical research activity is a driver for high quality cancer care, with better outcomes for patients who are treated in research-intensive hospitals.<sup>15</sup>

Scotland has a strong research base, including CRUK centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow Centre, as well as Glasgow's prestigious CRUK Beatson Institute. Pivotal cancer trials have been run in these centres, achieving important breakthroughs. For example, the trial which led to the global marketing authorisation of lapatinib to target breast cancers with large amounts of the HER2 protein.<sup>16</sup>

Clinical research was paused at the start of the pandemic, resulting in a 98% drop in patients recruited to UK cancer trials, and remains below pre-pandemic levels. Although the vital role of science and medical research has been reinforced by the development of COVID-19 vaccines, the loss of income to medical research funders such as charities poses major risks to the funding of future research.

**The next Scottish Government should take action to preserve vital investment and protect Scotland's medical research capacity and expertise during the recovery. This should be complemented by efforts to foster a vibrant and active research culture that is fully integrated into all levels of the health system in Scotland.**

## References

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## About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the world's largest independent cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. Our ambition is to see 3 in 4 patients surviving their cancer by 2034. We support research into all aspects of cancer through the work of over 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses. In 2019/20, we invested over £42 million in research in Scotland, at our two research centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as in Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling. Cancer Research UK is right at the heart of communities across Scotland, with 80 high street shops supported by hundreds of volunteers, and annual fundraising events such as Race for Life bringing together thousands of our supporters to help us beat cancer.

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