

Unlock

Life-saving

progress



Join our campaign to
Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs



**CANCER
RESEARCH
UK**

Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs

Your Campaigns
Ambassador Toolkit

June 2026

**Together we are
beating cancer**

Contents

03

About the
campaign

13

Your campaign
action

21

Frequently
asked
questions

25

Share the
campaign

28

Resources

31

Get in touch

01. About the campaign



Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs

Breakthroughs in cancer research are transforming how we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer, bringing hope to millions of people now and in the future.

But right now, research in the UK is being held back.

This means new treatments and innovations are taking too long to reach patients, costing them time and hope they can't afford to lose.

In the UK, around 1,100 people are diagnosed with cancer every day, each relying on progress in cancer research to deliver better treatments and outcomes. And with cancer cases projected to rise, **we need to unlock more of what cancer research can achieve.**

That's why we're calling on UK Governments to act now to remove the barriers holding back research so we can **unlock more cancer breakthroughs** for people affected by cancer.

Your campaign 'elevator pitch'

This page is a snapshot of the key messages – think of it as your **elevator pitch** to guide conversations. For more detail on the campaign, explore the pages that follow.

What is Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs calling for?



The campaign is calling on UK Governments to act now to remove the barriers holding back research and **unlock more cancer breakthroughs for people affected by cancer**.

Why is research important?



Breakthroughs in cancer research are transforming how we prevent, detect and treat cancer, bringing hope to millions of people now and in the future.

Research saves lives. Thanks to decades of cancer research, cancer survival has doubled since the 1970s in the UK.

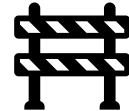
Why do we need change now?



Cancer diagnoses in the UK are projected to exceed half a million annually by 2040. The pressure on research to deliver breakthroughs will only grow.

We have entered a golden age of science. New tools and technologies mean that breakthroughs that were once out of reach are closer than ever before.

We must act now, otherwise we risk missing a window of opportunity to deliver lifesaving progress for people affected by cancer.



What barriers are holding research back in the UK?

- 1) **Clinical trials take too long to set up in the UK** due to complex set-up processes and not enough staff, time and resources in the health system to carry out research.
- 2) **The UK is missing out on world-class researchers** because of a costly and complex immigration system.
- 3) **Without commitment to long-term, protected investment into research**, we're limited in how far and fast we can go to improve how we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.



What do these barriers mean for people affected by cancer?

New treatments and innovations are taking too long to reach patients, costing people affected by cancer time and hope they can't afford to lose.

What are we asking for?



Unlock faster clinical trials – We need governments across the UK to address the barriers slowing down set up of all clinical trials. This includes streamlining set-up processes and improving workforce capacity.



Unlock global talent – We need the Home Office to reduce immigration costs for international researchers and work with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, HM Treasury and Department for Business and Trade to deliver clear messaging around attracting the best researchers.



Unlock investment – We need governments across the UK to commit to long-term, protected increases in research funding in all four nations, to boost the economy and ensure people affected by cancer today and in the future, can benefit from the breakthroughs.

Why research matters



Breakthroughs in cancer research are transforming how we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer, bringing hope to millions of people now and in the future.

Thanks to decades of cancer research, cancer survival has doubled since the 1970s in the UK.

Despite this progress, cancer remains the leading cause of death in the UK and cases are projected to exceed half a million annually by 2040*. **We need to unlock more of what cancer research can achieve.**

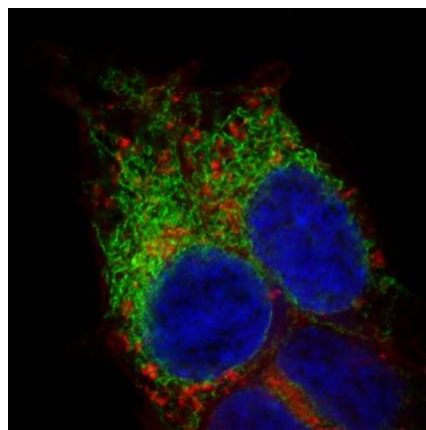
* Source: Cancer Research UK. [Cancer in the UK: Overview 2026](#). April 2026.

Our impact

- At Cancer Research UK, we carry out world-class research into more than 200 types of cancer through the work of more than 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.
- Our research has played a role in more than half of the world's essential cancer drugs.
- 8 in 10 people who are prescribed cancer drugs in the UK receive a drug developed by us, or with us*

*Estimated based on CRUK analysis of NHS England data in 2023

The story behind cisplatin and carboplatin



Our researchers led some of the first-in-human trials of cisplatin (Platinol).

After its initial discovery and development by several US groups, we supported the initial clinical trials of cisplatin in cancer patients in the early 1970s. This included trials at the Royal Marsden, led by Dr Eve Wiltshaw.

Following this work, our researchers developed carboplatin: a more potent, less toxic alternative to cisplatin. Professor Hilary Calvert led clinical trials in the 1980s, and today carboplatin is now the most commonly prescribed chemotherapy drug in the UK, used to treat nearly 29,000 patients every year*.

*Estimated based on CRUK analysis of England data

Top tip: Sharing the impact of research with examples of real breakthroughs can make your message more powerful when speaking about the campaign to others. See the resources on [page 30](#) for examples of cancer breakthroughs that are changing lives today.

How research is being held back



Clinical trials take too long to set up in the UK due to complex set-up processes and not enough staff, time and resources in the health system to carry out research. This means life-saving tests and treatments aren't reaching patients fast enough.



The UK is missing out on world-class researchers because of a costly and complex immigration system. Without the very best scientists, people affected by cancer are missing out on benefitting from potential breakthroughs.



Without commitment to long-term, protected investment into research we're limited in how far and fast we can go to improve how we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.



What are clinical trials? Clinical trials are medical research studies involving people. They test new treatments to confirm they're safe, effective and can work better than current treatments. They also help us test new ways to prevent and detect cancer. Clinical trials are essential to advancing cancer care and also give patients access to new, innovative treatments while they are being developed. This can be game-changing for patients with limited treatment options.

You can find words in pink in our '**Jargon Buster**' on page 29.



What are we asking for?

1. Unlock faster clinical trials

The problem: In the UK, clinical trial set up times are unnecessarily slow, held back by complex set-up processes and not enough staff, time and resources in the health system to carry out research. While it's positive to see the UK Government making meaningful progress to reduce the average set up time for **commercial trials**, it is important **non-commercial trials** aren't left behind. In 2023/24, over 95% of patients recruited to UK **interventional clinical studies** were recruited to non-commercial trials – this includes trials investigating rare, hard-to-treat, or children's and young people's cancers where there is still much progress to be made.

The ask: We need to see action from governments across the UK to address the barriers slowing down both commercial and non-commercial clinical trial set up. This includes streamlining set-up processes and improving workforce capacity to deliver research so life-saving tests and treatments can reach patients faster.



What are commercial and non-commercial clinical trials? Commercial clinical trials are funded and sponsored by private sector organisations, for example pharmaceutical companies. Non-commercial trials are funded by the public sector or charities like Cancer Research UK. They recruit the majority of patients in the UK and often investigate drugs that are promising but may not be profitable.



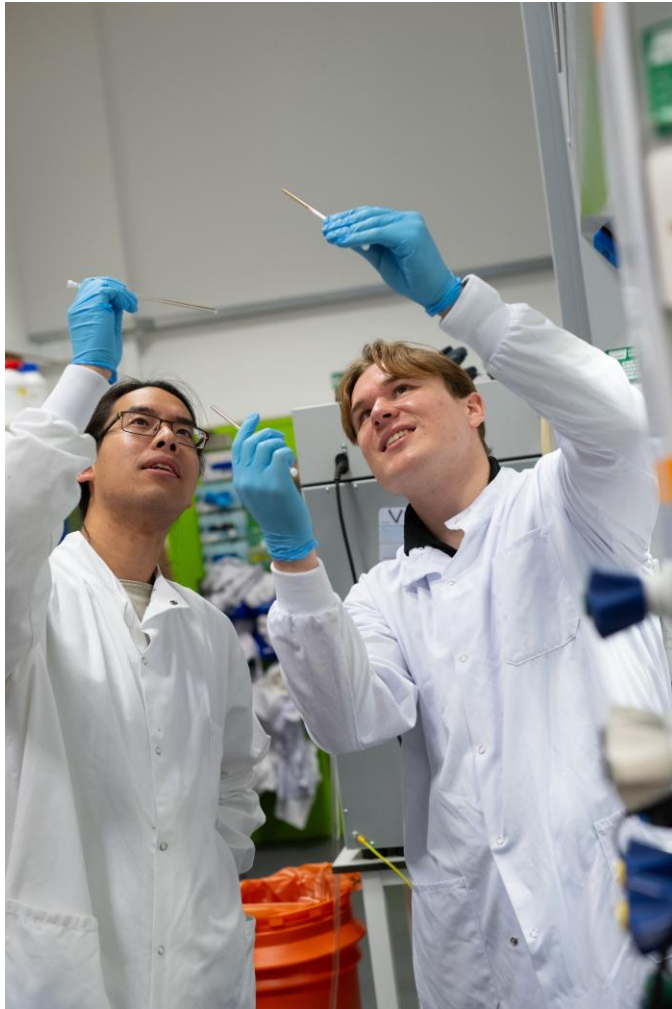
What are we asking for?

2. Unlock global talent

The problem: The UK is home to world-class researchers, and at Cancer Research UK, we are developing the UK's cancer research leaders of tomorrow by supporting scientists and clinical academics at every stage of their careers. We invested £47.1m in supporting research careers in the 2024/25 financial year, and support around 500 PhD students across our research portfolio to help drive the next generation of cancer breakthroughs.

When the best minds around the world come together, breakthroughs happen faster. But a complex and costly immigration system is holding this back, delaying vital research that could be improving cancer outcomes. The total costs of visas at our institutes in 2024-25 was £870,000*. This money is being taken away from funding the development of life-saving tests and treatments for people affected by cancer.

The ask: We need the Home Office to reduce immigration costs for researchers and work with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, HM Treasury and Department for Business and Trade to deliver clear messaging around attracting the best researchers, so the UK is in the best position to power the next big discoveries.



What are we asking for?

3. UnLock investment

The problem: Thanks to decades of cancer research, cancer survival has doubled since the 1970s in the UK, but this rate of improvement has slowed over time. Making continued progress in cancer research is essential to changing this trajectory. Breakthroughs in cancer research rely on decades of sustained effort and investment – when investment into research slows, so does the progress we are making.

Research not only saves lives but it is also a powerful driver of economic growth. The life sciences sector is one of the UK's most valuable and productive sectors, generating £146.9 billion and employing over 350,000 people*. Every £1 invested in cancer research generates an estimated £2.80 in benefits for the economy**. Failing to protect investment into life sciences comes at a real cost.

The ask: We need governments across the UK to commit to long-term, protected increases in research funding in all four nations, to boost the economy and ensure people affected by cancer today and in the future, can benefit from the breakthroughs.

* Source: Office for Life Sciences. [Bioscience and health technology sector statistics 2023 to 2024](#). Published 2 October 2025.

** Source: Cancer Research UK. [Understanding the economic value of cancer research](#). Published June 2022.



GDP or Gross domestic product is a measure of the size and health of a country's economy over a period.

Why are we asking for change now?

The urgency: In the UK, around 1,100 people are diagnosed with cancer every day, each relying on progress in cancer research to deliver better treatments and outcomes. And with cancer cases in the UK projected to exceed half a million annually by 2040, the pressure on research to deliver these outcomes will only grow.

The challenge: Right now, cancer research in the UK is being held back by blocks in the research environment.

The opportunity: We are living in a golden age of science, where new tools and technologies mean that breakthroughs that once felt out of reach are closer than ever before.

That's why the UK Government must act *now* to remove barriers to unlock cancer breakthroughs, otherwise we risk missing a critical window to deliver life-saving progress for people affected by cancer.

02. Your campaign action

Meeting your MP

01 Arranging a meeting with
your MP

02 Starting the meeting
with your MP

03 Introducing the Unlock
Cancer Breakthroughs
campaign

04 What are we asking
for?

05 Ask your MP to support
a debate on UK cancer
research

06 Closing the meeting
with your MP

Your campaign action: Meeting your MP

Arranging a meeting with your MP

Deadline: 4th September 2026

Skills: Relationship building, Influencing, Storytelling



Find your MP's contact details

You can contact your constituency MP by email or by phone. You can find your MP's contact details [here](#).

Arrange the meeting

Confirm a date after the launch of the campaign (8 July) and a place to meet your MP in your constituency. In your email or phone call you can:

- Introduce yourself as a constituent and volunteer Campaigns Ambassador for Cancer Research UK
- Briefly share why beating cancer matters to you
- Explain that you'd like to meet them to discuss why research matters for people affected by cancer alongside some the challenges facing research in the UK.
- Ask for a meeting at a convenient time after the 8 July

Let us know when your meeting is booked in

Once you have confirmed when you are meeting your MP, **please reach out to the Campaigns team**, as they will be able to provide you with more information on how your MP might be able to support any upcoming activity.

Your campaign action: Meeting your MP

Starting the meeting with your MP



Introduce yourself

- Talk about your role as a volunteer Campaigns Ambassador with Cancer Research UK.
- Mention where you live in their constituency.
- Ask your MP how long you will have with them so you can tailor how much depth you go into with your key messages accordingly. The length of your meeting will depend on your MP's diary – it could be 5 minutes, but it could also be an hour long.

Why does beating cancer matter to you?

- The most memorable thing about your meeting is you, and your experiences. Have a think about why you're here today and why this matters to you:
 - What are your motivations for volunteering as a Campaigns Ambassador?
 - Why is beating cancer important to you personally?

Build a connection with your MP

- Get to know your MP before the meeting. You can learn more about your MP through their website, social media channels, Wikipedia page and [parliamentary profile](#). Understanding their interests and background can help you build a stronger connection.

Your campaign action: Meeting your MP

Introducing 'Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs'

After you have introduced yourself, you can begin to set out why you are meeting your MP today.



How is research helping us beat cancer?

- Use our elevator pitch on page 5 to explain how research is transforming how we prevent, detect and treat cancer.
- You can bring these messages to life with an example of a cancer breakthrough that is changing lives today (see our Resources on page 30).

What is holding research back?

- Use our elevator pitch on page 5 to explain how research is being held back.
- We recommend prioritising one barrier holding research back if you have limited time.

And that's where our new campaign, *Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs*, comes in.

- Our campaign is calling on the UK Government to act now to remove the barriers holding back research so we can unlock more cancer breakthroughs for people affected by cancer.

Your campaign action: Meeting your MP

What are we asking for?

Our calls

- Use our elevator pitch and pages 9-11 to guide your conversation about what we're asking for.
- We recommend prioritising one policy call that resonates with you most if you have limited time.

Make it personal – Why does the campaign really matter to you?

- Do you have a connection to research? Perhaps someone you know has benefited from research, or research has enabled treatments that made a difference to you or your loved ones.



Your campaign action: Meeting your MP

Ask your MP to speak at a debate on UK cancer research



On the 8 July, ambassadors attending Parliament day will be asking MPs to help secure a backbench business debate on supporting UK cancer research.

To make a backbench business debate happen, MPs will need to sign a request to the Backbench Business Committee which decides which debates to schedule. We need at least 8 signatures across both major political parties (Labour and Conservative) for the debate to take place.

Even though you won't be attending Parliament Day, you still have an important role to play:

- **Ask your MP to attend and speak at the backbench business debate on supporting UK cancer research.**
- Once your meeting is booked in, it is important to contact the Campaigns team, so we can let you know any information to support this ask, including when the debate has been scheduled for.



What's a backbench business debate? Backbench business debates give backbench MPs an opportunity to have a debate on a topic of their choice. **Backbench MPs** are MPs who are not government ministers nor opposition spokespeople. They sit in the rows of benches behind their parties' spokespeople who are known as frontbenchers.

Backbench business debates do not often involve a vote on a particular action or decision. Instead, they are a way to:

- raise awareness of an issue, often as part of a wider campaign
- influence government policy
- put the views of backbench MPs, opposition parties, and the government on record.

Backbench Business debates happen in the House of Commons Chamber or in Westminster Hall. They last at least 90 minutes.

Your campaign action: Meeting your MP

Closing the meeting with your MP

Thank them for their time

Finish by thanking your MP for taking the time to meet with you.

Ask for a photo with your MP for social media

- Before the meeting ends, ask your MP if they would be happy to take a quick photo together to highlight their support for the campaign.
- Let them know you'll be sharing the photo on social media and that it would be great if they could repost or share it as well.

Follow up with your MP

After the meeting, you can send a short follow-up email thanking your MP for their time and referencing your discussion.

Let the Campaigns team know how your meeting went so we can support you with next steps and any follow-up needed.



03. Frequently asked questions



What about the devolved nations?

The barriers holding back research affect all four nations of the UK. We therefore need governments across the UK to unlock more cancer breakthroughs for people affected by cancer, no matter where they live.

Our campaign launch is focused on Westminster, but we recognise that some decisions around science and research are made by both the UK Government and devolved administrations. Health is devolved, meaning decisions around how clinical trials are set up and delivered sit with each nation. We are already calling for progress on this in our [Wales](#) and [Scotland](#) manifestos and will be doing the same in our Northern Ireland manifesto in September.

While the UK Government determines overall research budgets across all four nations, devolved administrations also play a role in shaping how research is supported within their nations. Decisions around immigration sit with the UK Government but impact all four nations. Devolved MPs can speak on these areas in the backbench business debate in Westminster to help drive change.



What if my MP does not commit to helping us secure a debate?

That's okay – your MP can still take part in the backbench business debate even if they don't sign the form at this stage.

If they are unsure or need more time to consider it, make a note of their response and let the Campaigns team know during the debrief session. We can then support you with any follow-up, such as sharing further information.



What if my MP asks a question that I don't know the answer to?

Don't worry – you're not expected to have all the answers.

If your MP asks something you're unsure about, it's absolutely fine to say that you don't know, but that you'll find out. You can let them know you'll pass their question on to the Campaigns team and will follow up.

Make sure to write the question down and let us know after your meeting so we can support with a response.

04. Share the campaign

Share on social media

Share the campaign with family, friends and your community to help us inspire more people to support it.

Get inspired by our example posts and get your campaign images by clicking on your favourites on this page.

You can also mention that you met with your MP on LinkedIn. See our mock LinkedIn post for inspiration.

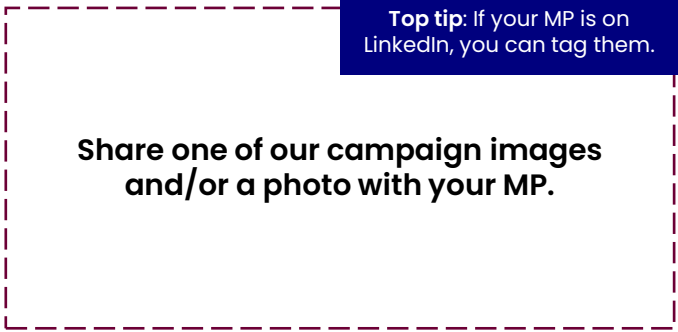


Today, it was a real pleasure to speak with **XXX MP** about why cancer research matters and the action needed to unlock more breakthroughs for people affected by cancer.

Breakthroughs in cancer research are transforming how we prevent, detect and treat cancer. But right now, research in the UK is being held back. Cancer remains the leading cause of death in the UK and diagnoses in the UK are projected to exceed half a million annually by 2040. We need to unlock more of what cancer research can achieve.

I'm proud to support **Cancer Research UK (CRUK)** in calling on the UK Government to remove the barriers holding back research to deliver life-saving progress for people affected by cancer.

Top tip: If your MP is on LinkedIn, you can tag them.



325 • 103 comments • 34 reposts

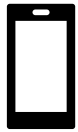


Breakthroughs in cancer research are transforming how we prevent, detect and treat cancer. But right now, research in the UK is being held back.

I'm joining **@cr_uk** in calling for the UK Government to remove the barriers holding back research to unlock more cancer breakthroughs for people affected by cancer.

Campaigning on social media

For campaigning, social media is a valuable tool where you can create your own content and share Cancer Research UK's posts to help reach more people with our campaign messages.



Which platform should I use?

In the UK, most people use more than one social media platform depending on what they want to say and who they want to read it.

In campaigning, X, Bluesky and LinkedIn are where you can usually find politicians to connect with them directly, while other platforms like Instagram are used more for sharing more widely with your own networks.

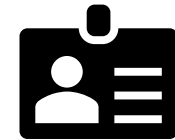
Try out a few to see which you like.



New to campaigning on social media?

Social media is a platform to connect with others and share stories. If you're new to using social media, you could try:

- Following family, friends and fellow Campaigns Ambassadors
- Sharing Cancer Research UK's posts until you feel comfortable to create your own
- Commenting on other people's posts and asking questions to start conversations
- Join our [Facebook group](#) to learn from others



Representing Cancer Research UK

As a charity, Cancer Research UK must remain independent and not give its support to any political party.

As a volunteer, it's essential to remember that when you are campaigning for Cancer Research UK, you must follow this too.

If your social media is for personal use as well as campaigning, you can include 'all views expressed are my own' within your profile and remember that even if you don't like someone's politics to always stay professional and polite.

05. Resources

Jargon Buster

We know some of the language around science and research can feel unfamiliar, so we've put together a list of key terms you might come across during the campaign.

Breakthroughs – Breakthroughs are new discoveries that could help us beat cancer.

Clinical trial – Clinical trials are medical research studies involving people. They test new treatments to confirm they're safe, effective and can work better than current treatments. They also help us test new ways to prevent and detect cancer.

Commercial clinical trials – clinical trials funded and sponsored by private sector organisations, for example pharmaceutical companies.

GDP – Gross domestic product is a measure of the size and health of a country's economy over a period.

Innovations – In the context of cancer, the word 'innovation' can mean a lot of things: a new diagnostic test or treatment, a new technology, or a new method of delivering a service. All innovations start as an idea, often from a researcher, that must go through many activities to become something usable and impactful for people affected by cancer.

Interventional clinical studies – Interventional trials aim to find out more about a particular intervention or treatment.

Non-commercial clinical trials – clinical trials funded by the public sector or charities like Cancer Research UK. A majority of patients recruited to trials are recruited to non-commercial trials, and they often investigate drugs that are promising but may not be profitable.

Unsure about a term that isn't listed here? Let us know and we'll add it to the Jargon Buster on the hub, where we're working on a dedicated Unlock Cancer Breakthroughs page.


Resources

- Visit your [Campaigns Ambassador Hub](#) where you can find top tips on meeting politicians, building relationships and storytelling.
- Discover some of the breakthroughs that are changing lives today:
 - [Catch up with Cancer Detectives](#) – Discover the real-world impact of pioneering research that could change everything in the powerful documentary series *Cancer Detectives: Finding the Cures* revealing the human stories being the science and the breakthroughs shaping the future of cancer treatment.
 - [Tune in to That Cancer Conversation](#) – If you like to learn while you take the dogs for a walk or on your commute to the office, we think you'll enjoy our Cancer Research UK podcast. Each episode focuses on an important cancer related topic, exploring stories from the people affected by it and highlighting the cutting-edge research unravelling its mysteries.
 - [Read the latest science news](#) to find out more about research, drug discovery and new technologies in cancer.
- You can also connect with other Campaigns Ambassadors for peer support or reach out to us if you have any questions.

Get in touch

For any questions, please reach out to the
Cancer Research UK Campaigns Team

 campaigning@cancer.org.uk

 0203 469 8899