

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE 1806](#)

Main Petitioner: Emily Waller on behalf of Pancreatic Cancer UK

Subject: Improving survival from pancreatic cancer

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to produce a national plan focusing on three areas to make pancreatic cancer a survivable disease:

- investing in strategic pancreatic cancer research to save lives
- delivering faster and better treatment and care across Scotland
- a national campaign to raise public awareness of pancreatic cancer symptoms

Background

According to [NHS Inform](#), and in common with a number of cancers, there are often no early symptoms to indicate pancreatic cancer and, when they do arise, symptoms are also similar to a number of other conditions. These two aspects make it difficult to diagnose early.

Around half of all new cases are diagnosed in people aged 75 or over. It's uncommon in people under 40 years of age.

Because of the difficulties in diagnosing this cancer and its' stage, size and position, treatment might not be successful. [Pancreatic Cancer Scotland](#) and [Cancer research UK](#) have comprehensive information on all aspects of the disease, including testing, staging and treatments. This information also states that, for most pancreatic cancers (not endocrine), survival rates are poor.

In Scotland, pancreatic cancer incidence rates have increased by 12% in the last 10 years and associated mortality rates by 6%.¹

“Survival for all stages of pancreatic cancer

Generally, for adults with pancreatic cancer in England and Wales:

¹ <https://www.scottishgenomespartnership.org/sgp-cancer-programme>

- around 20 in every 100 (around 20%) survive their cancer for 1 year or more after they are diagnosed
- almost 5 out of every 100 (almost 5%) survive their cancer for 5 years or more
- only 1 out of every 100 (1%) will survive their cancer for 10 years or more after diagnosis” (Cancer Research UK)

Organisations and links below provide detailed information on the disease, its symptoms, treatments, sources of support and research.

The [Scottish Genomes Partnership](#) (SGP) focused on four cancers that are hard to treat and clinically important: pancreatic, oesophageal, ovarian and brain, and sequenced stored samples to assist further research. This research was funded by the Scottish Government through the Chief Scientist’s Office and the UK Medical Research Council.

In a global context, Scotland does not have a higher incidence or worse outcomes than elsewhere. According to the [World Cancer Research Fund](#) it is a disease of wealthier countries, and that smoking and obesity are high risk factors. They state that it is the 12th most common cancer in men and the 11th most common cancer in women.

Scottish Government Action

There are [referral guidelines](#), published in January 2019, for suspected cancer in Scotland. These refer to pancreatic cancer, along with Oesophago-Gastric (oesophagus and stomach), Hepatobiliary (liver, bile duct and gallbladder) cancers. The guidelines give clear instruction on testing, clusters of symptoms and when urgent referral is recommended. It says that, “Approximately 2,900 people are diagnosed with a primary oesophago-gastric, hepatobiliary or pancreatic cancer in Scotland every year”.

In 2016, the Scottish Government published a cancer strategy: [Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action \(2016\)](#). The Cabinet Secretary, Jeane Freeman, [published a short update](#) in April this year, adding information on progress under the heading: ‘achievements, new action and testing change’. The only mention of pancreatic cancer is on research funding, with the contribution of £150,000 towards the research referred to above, now completed, but not published on the SGP website. This is not remarkable, because the strategy takes an holistic view of how cancer should be addressed, regardless of type. Detail on referral and clinical approach is, of course, specific to each cancer.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which produces evidence-based clinical guidance available to all clinicians in the UK, has published a [range of general and specific guidelines on pancreatic cancer](#).

The following is taken from the [Scottish Government web pages](#) on policies regarding illnesses and long term conditions:

Scottish Cancer Taskforce

The Scottish Cancer Taskforce (SCT) is responsible for overseeing the actions in the cancer strategy. The SCT isn't responsible for delivering the strategy but it does provide oversight for all issues relating to cancer in Scotland. It is also responsible for liaising with other bodies/groups as necessary and it may be asked to provide advice to the Scottish Government on matters relating to cancer care in Scotland.

*The National Cancer Clinical Services Group (NCCSG) and Radiotherapy Sub Group (RTSG) support the SCT by advising on specific areas of work which are needed to deliver specific actions as set out in the strategy. **Detect Cancer***

Early (DCE)

We [launched the Detect Cancer Early Programme in February 2012](#). The aim of the programme is to improve survival for people with cancer in Scotland to amongst the best in other European countries by diagnosing and treating the disease at an earlier stage.

The programme focuses on lung, bowel and breast cancers as they account for around 43% of all cancers diagnosed in Scotland. The programme has an associated [HEAT target](#) to increase the proportion of stage ones diagnosed by 25%.

The programme adopts a whole-systems approach with five workstreams:

- *primary care*
- *secondary care*
- *data and evaluation*
- *screening*
- *public awareness*

The Information Services Division (ISD) website provides [a wealth of statistics, data, and information about cancer in Scotland](#).

Detect Cancer Early's website - [Get Checked Early](#) - provides [information about possible signs and symptoms of cancer and screening programmes as well as early detection stories](#)."

Scottish Parliament Action

A range of questions about pancreatic cancer have been raised in the Scottish Parliament during this Parliamentary session:

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Simple&Keyword=pancreatic%20cancer&ExactPhrase=True&DateChoice=4&SortBy=DateSubmitted&ResultsPerPage=10>

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14 May 2020

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