



The APPG for Radiotherapy

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Tim Farron MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Saturday 12th June 2021

RE: The urgent cancer backlog crisis, signed by the cancer community and parliamentarians

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned, as Parliamentarians and representatives of the cancer community, are writing to ask if you will meet with us to discuss the more urgent response needed to tackle the COVID induced cancer backlog. We are gravely concerned that the scale and severity of this backlog is not being accepted and that existing measures to tackle it are not sufficient. As a result, we fear that tens of thousands of cancer patients will be lost unnecessarily. There is widespread frustration that our calls for urgent action are not being heeded and that a range of organisational and technological solutions that could efficiently tackle this crisis continue to be overlooked. There are so very many exciting science and technology solutions which could revolutionise how we deliver cancer care and transform cancer outcomes in the UK both now and in the future.

There can be no doubt that our health and care workers have performed heroically in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic. And front-line staff continue to go 'above and beyond' in terms of dedication and devotion to their work.



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However, we urge you to accept that the cancer backlog cannot be tackled by existing staff just 'working harder', and by delegating responsibility down to Trusts as appears to be the current thinking.

Rather, it needs a new national plan, driven from Ministerial level and backed by investment in equipment, the workforce and changes to working practices.

You will be aware of Government figures indicating that there are currently at least 40,000 'missing' and undiagnosed cancer patients. Combined with the widespread disruption to the entire cancer pathway which will take years to restore we are facing the most serious crisis in cancer in a generation.

Put starkly, every 4 weeks delay in cancer treatment reduces survival on average by 10%. Clinicians are already reporting that more patients are now presenting with late stage cancers which have passed the point of being curable.

Without urgent action we face a second devastating health crisis as the COVID wards empty and the cancer wards fill.

Your vaccine strategy has shown the world what can be achieved by prioritising a problem, appointing an experienced leader in charge with full responsibility, supported by a team of independent experts in the field, not taking no for an answer and working without being hindered by bureaucracy and with a ring fenced investment budget. Such a strategy and investment for cancer will halt the emerging crisis, ultimately save money, reverse the decline of the last years and be the envy of the world.

We are asking that you meet with us to discuss the recommendations of the joint APPG chair's report: "Catch Up With Cancer- The Way Forward" - informed by a consultation of over 30 medical colleges, charities, clinicians and frontline cancer workers.

We urge you to take on board the recommendations of the report, and:

- Recognise the existence and scale of the COVID induced cancer backlog, the disruption to the whole of the cancer pathways and the exhaustion of staff.



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- Appoint a Minister with responsibility to lead and oversee a national cancer recovery plan and strategy for the future of cancer care. That Minister should:
 - be supported by an independent expert advisory group of professionals.
 - have the power to deliver investment and sweep away bureaucracy to unlock new capacity.
 - have the freedom of action required to develop a new approach to deliver a resilient cancer service which is one of the best of high-income countries, not the worst.
- Deliver the urgently needed ringfenced investment for cancer infrastructure.
- Provide urgent parallel investment in diagnostic equipment to complement the investment we are recommending in treatment, including the £325 million investment in diagnostic infrastructure recommended to us by the Royal College of Radiologists.
- Provide urgent parallel investment in treatment equipment to complement the investment we are recommending in diagnosis; we recommend adopting the APPG for Radiotherapy's 6-point plan to transform radiotherapy as a cost of approximately £850 million over three years.
- Commit to immediate funding for innovative short-term solutions to assist the workforce crisis and commit to at least the 20% increase in the professionals needed to run the service.
- Listen directly to frontline staff and implement "oven ready" technology solutions, data intelligence and sweep away unnecessary bureaucracy.

We urge you to meet with a delegation drawn from our number and work with us to avert a national cancer crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Farron MP, Chair of the APPG for Radiotherapy



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Cancer community signatures

Dr Michael Osborn, President, Royal College of Pathologists
Dr Jeanette Dickson, President, Royal College of Radiologists
Chris Kalinka, President of Society and College of Radiographers, The Society of Radiographers
Dr Ajay Aggarwal, Clinical Oncologist, Institute of Cancer Policy
Dr Vivian Cosgrove, Chair, The Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine's (IPEM)
Professor Richard Sullivan, Director, Institute of Cancer Policy
Professor Pat Price, Chair, Action Radiotherapy, and founder of #CatchUpWithCancer
Professor Gordon Wishart, Chief Medical Officer, Check4Cancer
Professor Karol Sikora, Chief Medical Officer, Rutherford Health
Dr Clive Peedel, Clinical Lead, James Cook University Hospital
Ann Harmer, Clinician
Professor Mathew Hatton, Clinical Oncology
Sally Edgington, Director, AXREM
Liz Darlison, CEO, Mesothelioma UK
Seren Hughes, Head of Engagement, Cancer Awareness for Teens and Twenties
Carolyn O'Donovan, Therapeutic Radiographer

Parliamentarian signatures

Tim Farron (Member of Parliament for Westmorland and Lonsdale)
Grahame Morris (Member of Parliament for Easington)
Steve Brine (Member of Parliament for Winchester & Chandler's Ford)
Rt Hon Esther McVey (Member of Parliament for Tatton)
Dr Lisa Cameron (Member of Parliament for East Kilbride)
Henry Smith (Member of Parliament for Crawley)
Sharon Hodgson (Member of Parliament for Washington and Sunderland West)
Tim Loughton (Member of Parliament for East Worthing & Shoreham)
Tonia Antoniazzi (Member of Parliament for Gower)
Sir Charles Walker (Member of Parliament for Broxbourne)
Rosie Cooper (Member of Parliament for West Lancashire)
Chris Green (Member of Parliament for Bolton West & Atherton)
Sir Ed Davey (Member of Parliament for Kingston and Surbiton)
Rt Hon Kevan Jones (Member of Parliament for North Durham)
Rebecca Long-Bailey (Member of Parliament for Salford and Eccles)
Rt Hon Sir John Hayes (Member of Parliament for South Holland and The Deepings)
Sir George Howarth (Member of Parliament for Knowsley)
Sarah Champion (Member of Parliament for Rotherham)
Andrew Gwynne (Member of Parliament for Denton and Reddish)
Jim Shannon (Member of Parliament for Strangford)
Kenny MacAskill (Member of Parliament for East Lothian)
Caroline Lucas (Member of Parliament for Brighton Pavilion)
Carla Lockhart (Member of Parliament for Upper Bann)
Paula Barker (Member of Parliament for Liverpool Wavertree)
Mick Whitley (Member of Parliament for Birkenhead)
Christine Jardine (Member of Parliament for Edinburgh West)
Jamie Stone (Member of Parliament for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross,)
Dan Carden (Member of Parliament for Liverpool Walton)



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Dan Jarvis (Member of Parliament for Barnsley Central)
Mohammad Yasin (Member of Parliament for Bedford and Kempston)
Derek Twigg (Member of Parliament for Halton)
Dr Philippa Whitford (Member of Parliament for Central Ayrshire)
John Spellar (Member of Parliament for Warley)
Ian Lavery (Member of Parliament for Wansbeck)
Zarah Sultana (Member of Parliament for Coventry South)
Alan Brown (Member of Parliament for Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Kim Johnson (Member of Parliament for Liverpool, Riverside)
Ali Tahir (Member of Parliament for Birmingham Hall Green)
Virendra Sharma (Member of Parliament for Ealing)
Kate Osborne (Member of Parliament for Jarrow)
Owen Thompson (Member of Parliament for Midlothian)
Neale Hanvey (Member of Parliament for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)
Douglas Chapman (Member of Parliament for Dunfermline and West Fife)
Peter Dowd (Member of Parliament for Bootle)
Christ Bryant (Member of Parliament for Rhondda)
Ian Byrne (Member of Parliament for Liverpool West Derby)
Wera Hobhouse (Member of Parliament for Bath)
Lord O'Donnell (House of Lords)
The Lord Bowness CBE DL, (House of Lords)
Rt Hon Lord Dodds of Duncairn (House of Lords)
Lord Rana MBE (House of Lords)
Lord Wood of Anfield (House of Lords)
Baroness Uddin (House of Lords)
Baroness Scott of Needham Market (House of Lords)
Lord Rennard (House of Lords)
Rt Hon Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (House of Lords)