



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From Helen Whately MP  
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The Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
By email to: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

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Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 November to Steve Barclay about cancer services. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I would like to assure you that cancer services remain an absolute priority. The NHS Long Term Plan ambitions – to diagnose 75 per cent of cancers at stage 1 or 2 and for 55,000 more people to survive five years or more by 2028 – still stand.

The Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care sets out how the NHS will recover and expand elective services over the next three years. NHS England and the Government are committed to returning the number of people waiting more than 62 days from an urgent referral to pre-pandemic levels by March 2023, and our ambition is that, by March 2024, 75 per cent of patients who have been urgently referred by their GP for suspected cancer be diagnosed or have cancer ruled out within 28 days.

We announced a total of £12 billion of funding for 2021/22 to support the NHS's response to COVID-19 and help tackle waiting lists, and an additional £2 billion to start the recovery of elective activity, including cancer services. This added to the long-term settlement for the NHS, which will see its funding increase by £33.9 billion by 2023/24. More than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25 will support elective service recovery, in addition to the £2.7 billion made available in 2021/22. We will improve outcomes for patients through nine million additional treatments and diagnostic procedures, and 30 per cent more elective activity than before the pandemic, by 2024/25. NHS England is also accelerating access to diagnosis and treatment by rolling out Best Practice Timed Pathways and the Faster Diagnosis Standard, which was introduced in October 2021. It is also investing in new equipment; for example, £84 million in 2021/22 to replace old imaging and radiotherapy equipment and £69.4 million for additional imaging equipment over the next three years.

Transforming the cancer workforce is vital to the recovery of services, and the NHS Long Term Plan continues to expand on this work. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of full-time equivalent staff in priority cancer professions rose by 4,300. Health Education England is taking forward priorities identified in the Cancer Workforce Plan Phase 1 and is investing £50 million more this year to expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce.

Between 4 February and 8 April, we ran a call for evidence to inform a new ten-year plan to improve cancer care, speed up diagnosis and invest in innovative new treatments. This was a success, with over 5,000 responses from people and organisations. Further announcements will be made in due course.

Yours,

**HELEN WHATELY**