

Scottish Cancer Coalition Policy Priorities

The Scottish Cancer Coalition is a partnership of 21 charities working in the field of cancer across Scotland. This membership is diverse, ranging in focus from research and prevention, to end of life care, and covering many site-specific cancers too. This diversity is an asset; it brings together a comprehensive range of skills and expertise in cancer, whilst our coming together allows us to coalesce around key policy priorities for action. Members will all separately pursue additional policy priorities more specific to their mission as appropriate.

The following represents the Scottish Cancer Coalition's Policy Priorities:

Cancer Plan

A national cancer plan is an extremely important tool in setting direction: it helps focus on and measure improvement in cancer outcomes, and work towards a national approach to cancer services meaning equality of treatment and care across Scotland. The Scottish Government's last cancer plan (published 2008) has served well in this regard and most of its objectives have been well met. With huge developments across cancer prevention, treatment and care in the meantime, the time is right for the production of a new cancer plan.

Scottish Government should produce a new national cancer plan, including a more national approach to services and a clinical lead for all cancer services.

Awareness and Early Detection

The earlier cancer is diagnosed, the better the chance of survival. Both the health service and the general public are vital to this early diagnosis. Awareness campaigns improve public understating of early cancer symptoms, increasing presentations, early diagnosis and successful treatments. Screening programmes can find cancer early and prevent cancer developing in the first place. Good education and management in the health service and strong, regularly-reviewed referral guidelines, drive more first time diagnoses and, again, better outcomes.

Scottish Government should continue the Detect Cancer Early programme. This should seek to raise public awareness but, in parallel, work to increase screening uptake and improve diagnostics within the NHS.

Care

Access to a clinical nurse specialist (CNS) is the key to improving experience of care, which is vital to creating a high quality and cost effective service. Patients with a CNS in general report being happier with their experience of cancer services – they feel more informed and supported. A cancer nurse specialist means personalising care and making sure it is based on the needs of the individual patient.

Scottish Government should ensure every cancer patient in Scotland has access to a clinical nurse specialist.

Patient Experience Survey

We believe a Scotland-wide Cancer Patient Experience Survey (CPES) would lead to patient experience being meaningfully prioritised, which in turn would promote transparency, drive improvements and ultimately make treatment and care more person-centred.

A regular CPES allows people living with cancer to be empowered to demand a better experience of care and hold the NHS to account when their experience falls below what should be expected.

Scottish Government should implement and publish a regular national cancer patient experience survey based on cancer plan priorities.

Treatments

Innovation in cancer treatments is constant, leading to both more effective and kinder treatments for patients. Radiotherapy and surgery services, responsible for the vast majority of cured cancers, continue to improve, and new chemotherapy and end of life medicines are emerging regularly. In the latter area, personalised medicines present exciting opportunities and a national molecular diagnostic service should be in place for patients to access these.

Scottish Government should ensure all cancer patients can access the best, evidence based treatments available for their condition, and continually seek better data on the efficacy and value of these.

Research and Trials

Clinical trials and research studies are the backbone of developing new and better preventions, cures and treatment for cancer. Studies show that patients taking part in clinical trials also experience better outcomes.

Scottish Government should review access to clinical trials and address any issues impeding set up and uptake of trials or research studies, including access to data for population studies.