



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1286
Ein cyf/Our ref EM/02175/22

Jack Sargeant MS
Chair - Petitions Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

7 July 2022

Dear Jack,

Thank you for your letter of 31 May on behalf of the petition committee regarding ensuring treatment and screening for cancer continues during COVID19.

As a Government, we have done all that we can to protect the NHS from the impact of this global pandemic. Very early on we agreed upon the essential services that needed to be protected from as much disruption as possible. This of course included cancer care. The Chief Executive of NHS Wales at the time gave significant focus to protecting cancer services through his work with the health boards in Wales. I and my predecessor, made significant new funding available to the NHS to support services and more broadly we are investing hundreds of millions of pounds in training new staff, including specialists in cancer care, and in new equipment used in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

However, it is unfortunately the case that while the pandemic was escalating the capacity to deliver some cancer treatments was disrupted and many patients chose to defer treatment at this time. This is likely to have an impact on cancer outcomes.

I have made recovery in cancer services a planning priority for the NHS. This means health boards and trust planning must focus on recovery in cancer services. This has been supplemented by actions for cancer services in our Programme for Transforming and Modernising Planned Care, which was published in April and can be found at:

[Transforming and modernising planned care and reducing waiting lists | GOV.WALES](#)

We know that to improve cancer outcomes we must ensure there is earlier detection and access to diagnostic investigation, rapid treatment on standardised pathways of care, better workforce planning and capacity, more integrated care enabled by the introduction of a new

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

cancer information system, the reconfiguration of fragile clinical services, and crucially better centralised support in terms of data and programme expertise.

We are encouraging people to come forward with possible symptoms of cancer, working through our national diagnostic programmes to improve timely access to imaging and endoscopic investigations, and providing national leadership and focus on increasing cancer treatment activity.

NHS services have introduced a number of changes to pathways to speed them up and we have set out nationally agreed pathways for most cancer types that all NHS bodies should seek to deliver. Additional staff have been funded in health boards to organise patient pathways that cross multiple teams between the referral, diagnostic, treatment and follow up stages. Programme support teams have been deployed to health boards to support them to reorganise their service to deliver the national pathways. New digital software is being deployed to assist operational managers for cancer to manage and track patient waiting lists. New training is being developed to support all the people involved in delivering cancer pathways to better understand how such complex pathways, spanning multiple teams, should work administratively.

I am confident that this combination of focus, effort and support that is being brought to bear will make a significant difference to the delivery of cancer services in the future. Our broader approach to improving quality in cancer services can be found at:

<https://gov.wales/quality-statement-cancer-html>

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services