



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

9th October 2020

Jean Confortant,

RE: PANCREATIC CANCER.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of pancreatic cancer, and specifically Pancreatic Cancer UK's 'No Time to Wait' campaign; your comments upon which I have read with great compassion and interest.

We all know someone close to us who has been affected by cancer, and sadly, as I'm sure you will be aware, pancreatic cancer is a common form of cancer with a higher mortality rate than others. Having lost my grandfather to this terrible disease, I know just how devastating it can be from personal experience and it is a cause close to my heart.

I'm pleased that tackling this is a top priority for the Government, particularly during these challenging times of Coronavirus. It is important that we remember that the NHS is open for business, and anyone who needs care and treatment should continue to access it as and when they need it, especially when delays could impose both an immediate and a long-term risk to health. I welcome that, due to COVID-19, the 21 cancer alliances in England have established hubs to ensure dedicated cancer care away from hospitals dealing with the virus.

In 2017, Public Health England launched 'Be Clear on Cancer', a campaign targeted at identifying symptoms of pancreatic cancer earlier – early diagnosis is key to improving outcomes, and in the *NHS Long Term Plan* published in January 2019, one of the priorities is to save 55,000 more lives each year by diagnosing more cancers early. This regional pilot included symptoms like persistent diarrhoea, bloating and discomfort. More than 90 percent of the target audience reported that the campaign made them realise these symptoms could be a sign of something more serious. More than 80 percent reported they were more likely to visit a GP as a result.

During 2020, NHS England is rolling out a new Faster Diagnostic Standard for all cancer patients, including those with suspected pancreatic cancer, which will see patients given a diagnosis or the all clear within 28 days. The 31-day standard of decision to treat, to undergoing first treatment, will remain in place. However, this is an upper limit and clinical priority will always remain the main determinant of when a patient should be treated.

Additionally, the *NHS Long Term Plan* laid out plans to roll out Rapid Diagnosis Centres, designed to speed up cancer diagnosis and support ambitions to achieve earlier diagnosis. Building on 10 models piloted with Cancer Research UK and Macmillan, these centres will begin by focusing on diagnosing patients with non-specific symptoms and who may go to their GP many times before being sent for tests. They will offer a personal, accurate and fast diagnosis service, with excellent patient experience.



I certainly share your ambition for faster treatment pathways across pancreatic and all types of cancer - and my colleagues at the Department for Health & Social Care are working hard to examine the work being done by clinicians to improve treatment timelines across the country.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,
Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**