



WALES CANCER ALLIANCE CYNGHRAIR CANSER CYMRU

Mark Isherwood MS
Chair, Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

14 January 2025

Dear Mr Isherwood,

Publication of Audit Wales report “NHS Wales’s strategic approach to improving timeliness of cancer diagnosis and treatment by Audit Wales”

On behalf of the Wales Cancer Alliance I wish to commend to the Public Accounts and Administration Committee the recent publication of *NHS Wales’s strategic approach to improving timeliness of cancer diagnosis and treatment* by Audit Wales. We hope the Committee takes an active interest in the report and findings to better understand where and how improvements can and should be delivered.

With only a few exceptions, cancer waiting times across Wales for all tumour sites has essentially stagnated on or below 60% for several years. Any annual improvement is cancelled out by winter pressures and progress backslides illustrating concerning fragility within Wales’ cancer services. Wales’ cancer outcomes are also amongst the worst across the developed world and cancer inequalities are increasing.

Alongside these troubling metrics the cancer third sector – represented in Wales by the Wales Cancer Alliance - has experienced a period of disengagement not of the Alliance’s making.

The positive working arrangements developed prior to the covid-19 pandemic were not resurrected post-pandemic. New governance arrangements associated with the clinical networks sitting within the NHS Executive have taken an extended period of time to emerge with little consultation. During this period we also saw the publication of a new cancer improvement plan and the creation of a completely new recovery programme for cancer. Updates and opportunities to scrutinise and support the delivery of cancer services have been frustratingly slow. People affected by cancer do not have the luxury of time on their side.

The Wales Cancer Alliance hopes that this report, its recommendations and any additional scrutiny by the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee will help with finally addressing these issues and deliver a service that fits for addressing current and future cancer challenges.

Action is needed. Currently, 54 people are diagnosed with cancer and about 25 people die from the disease each day in Wales. Projections indicate a more than 10% increase in Welsh cancer cases by 2038-2040: which will place additional strain on our healthcare system.



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We would welcome a response to this correspondence in due course; and look forward to working with the Committee - to provide the third sector perspective - should the opportunity arise.

Yn gywir,

Lowri Griffiths

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Chair, Wales Cancer Alliance

cc.

Russell George MS, Chair, Health and Social Care Committee