



The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria St
London SW1H 0EU

8 October 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to raise with you this week's announcement at Conservative Party Conference that a new policy will be implemented that is intended to secure patients a cancer diagnosis within three weeks.

We believe this policy to be positive and important for cancer patients. However, we were concerned by media coverage which suggested that this new policy will focus on breast, bowel, prostate and lung cancer – commonly known as the 'big four' cancers.

Blood cancers are the fifth most common type of adult cancer, the most common cancer amongst children, and the third biggest cancer killer, and crucially, these cancers claim more lives every year than breast or prostate cancer. However, we believe policy-making in general continues to be heavily weighted towards the 'big four' cancers and opportunities to explore how to improve outcomes for blood cancer patients are missed. Should new policy on early diagnosis focus on the 'big four' alone, we believe this issue will be compounded.

Early diagnosis is particularly problematic within blood cancer. This group of cancers is complex and symptoms are often misunderstood or misdiagnosed. Lack of awareness amongst not only the general public, but also GPs and cancer policy decision-makers, means that blood cancer has been left behind. We know many patients who have had to visit their GP more than six times before they have been referred on for a simple blood test, and blood cancer is more commonly diagnosed in the emergency setting, when disease progression has occurred, than in many other cancers.

We recently met with NHS England and have made a full submission to its Call for Evidence to the development of the new 10-year cancer plan. Within that submission, we raised the issue of early diagnosis and also issues of focusing or piloting new policies within the 'big four' cancers alone. Quite simply, it leaves patients with rarer and more complex cancers behind and does nothing to improve outcomes or experiences for those people. We believe that any new measures to address issues of early diagnosis should be tested as fit for purpose for all cancer patients, and not just focused on those with cancers for which diagnosis is less complex or symptoms more widely understood among GPs and the public.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet you in Westminster and tell you more about the work we do, and the urgent need to address challenges faced by blood cancer patients. If that is of interest, please do get in touch with the secretariat to the Alliance on bloodcanceralliance@atlas-partners.co.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henny Braund". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Henny Braund
Chief Executive, Anthony Nolan



From and on behalf of the Blood Cancer Alliance:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gemma Peters".

Gemma Peters,
Chief Executive, Bloodwise

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Innes".

Dave Innes
Chair, CLL Support Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zack Pemberton-Whiteley".

Zack Pemberton-Whiteley
Campaigns and Advocacy Director, Leukaemia Care

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandy Craine".

Sandy Craine
Director, CML Support Group

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sophie Wintrich".

Sophie Wintrich
Chief Executive, MDS UK Patient Support Group

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ropinder Gill".

Ropinder Gill
Chief Executive, Lymphoma Action

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Brown".

Roger Brown
Chair, WMUK

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemarie Finley".

Rosemarie Finley
Chief Executive, Myeloma UK

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Badger".

Joanne Badger
Coordinator, Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Orin Lewis".

Orin Lewis
Co-Founder & Chief Executive, ACLT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Smith-Morgan".

Angela Smith-Morgan
Chief Executive, Leukaemia UK