



January 2024

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the #CatchUpWithCancer campaign.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that one of the top priorities for the Government is to see waiting lists for cancer treatment and care, including radiotherapy, significantly reduced over the next few years. During 2023, the Government provided funding to help recover cancer services, and a plan that outlines how that funding will be spent effectively.

It is right that this funding comes with high expectations for reducing cancer waiting times. By March 2024, the NHS has set an ambition for 75% of patients who have been urgently referred by their GP for suspected cancer to be diagnosed or have cancer ruled out within 28 days. Some progress is being made towards diagnosing patients earlier, with the NHS meeting the Faster Diagnosis Standard for suspected cancer for the first time in February 2023.

Levels of first treatment following an urgent cancer referral have been consistently above pre-pandemic levels, with activity in May this year standing at 111% of pre-pandemic levels on a per working day basis. Over 52,000 people had their first or subsequent treatment for cancer in May. In total, over 332,000 people received their first cancer treatment in the 12 months up to May, which is up by more than 18,000 on the same period before the pandemic.

Tackling major conditions that cause ill-health - including cancer - provides an opportunity to improve the lives of millions of people. That is why a Major Conditions Strategy is being developed to outline how outcomes in six major condition areas will be improved, including all cancers.

In the meantime, I understand that the payment arrangements for radiotherapy have been reviewed to ensure providers can increase access to new treatments and upgrade and replace equipment. These arrangements came into effect in April 2023. Reinforced by £6 billion of capital investment in the 2021 Spending Review, the NHS is also gradually reducing the number of linear accelerators aged 10 years or over.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

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I also understand that the Government has published a delivery plan for tackling the elective care backlogs caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Ministers will spend more than £8 billion between now and 2024-25 to drive up elective activity, including cancer diagnosis and treatment. On top of this, £21 million of funding has been announced to roll out AI across the NHS, which will help to improve diagnosis and to reduce waiting times for cancer care.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**