

19 December 2006

Gateway reference: 7605



Room 403, Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG

Dear Colleague

Further details on the Cancer Reform Strategy

I promised I would give you an update on how we are progressing by the end of the year and thought you would like to know how this exciting opportunity is developing.

It's probably worth repeating the principles behind the new reform strategy. The strategy will recognise the new challenges and opportunities facing cancer, such as rising incidence, advances in medical technologies, new drugs and rising expectations amongst the public. It will focus on reform rather than spending commitments - giving patients more choice, strengthening commissioning and making the new NHS levers work for cancer.

It will be about shifting care from inpatients to outpatients and from hospital to community and maximising opportunities for prevention and early diagnosis. It will continue to build on the progress of the Cancer Plan by spreading best practice and recommending what more needs to be done by cancer networks and the NHS to improve clinical outcomes, drive up quality and increase value for money.

In the past two weeks, we have agreed how the strategy will be developed. Rosie Winterton the Minister for Health Services has invited senior representatives from the voluntary sector, the NHS and the Department of Health onto a high level advisory board. This board will meet around three times in the next year and will be responsible for the overall direction of the strategy.

We have also identified a number of key areas for detailed examination, some of which will have their own working groups to develop solid proposals. These include:

- Clinical outcomes measurement;
- Patient experience;
- Provider development/service models;
- Commissioning and levers for change;
- Costs and benefits (value for money);
- Awareness and early detection.

We will also be closely looking at both the common cancers, and those which are less common. The strategy will cover a 5 to 10 year period and it will be submitted to ministers next autumn (2007).

The strategy will set a road-map for reforming services in the same timescale as the London 2012 Olympics.

As I said in my last letter, the development of this strategy is not something that I can do alone. I need to work with you and all those with an interest in cancer.

I will be providing regular updates during 2007 as we achieve major milestones.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

With best wishes

Professor Mike Richards
National Cancer Director