



Let's end the **capacity**
crisis

Beating bowel cancer together



Bowel Cancer^{UK}

Introduction from Bowel Cancer UK

A Capacity Crisis in Bowel Cancer Diagnostic Services

Bowel cancer remains the UK's second biggest cancer killer, with over 16,000 dying from it each year. This is despite the disease being both treatable and curable, especially if diagnosed early. In order to help improve survival rates our top priority is implementing an optimal bowel cancer screening programme, committed to by the Government. The single biggest constraint to making this a reality is still a lack of endoscopy and pathology capacity.

That's why we launched our **End the Capacity Crisis** campaign with an open letter calling on the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to work together to ensure funding is properly allocated to tackle the growing workforce crisis ahead of the Government spending review.

A fully funded action plan is urgently needed to address how workforce can be increased and staff trained, so we can meet the Government's pledge to save more lives by diagnosing people earlier and make necessary improvements to the bowel cancer screening programme.

To ensure this is considered as part of decisions made ahead of the spending review and the publication of the NHS 10 Year Plan, please find enclosed the following documents:

- **Open Letter:** Our open letter signed by over 7,000 patients, NHS staff, people with loved ones affected by bowel cancer and the public. This letter calling for a fully funded action plan has been endorsed by the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland, the Joint Advisory Group on GI Endoscopy and the British Society of Gastroenterology.
- **Letter from Members of Parliament:** A letter signed by 45 cross party MPs publically supporting the campaign.

We can't continue to paper over the cracks with short-term initiatives. We need a long-term solution to finally deal with this crisis in diagnostic services for bowel cancer. The imminent Government spending review and development of the NHS 10 Year Plan provides an important opportunity to address this issue.

Bowel Cancer UK Open Letter

Dear Mr Hancock and Mr Hammond,

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the growing capacity crisis within diagnostic services for bowel cancer and to call on you to work together to ensure NHS hospitals have the staff needed to carry out these lifesaving tests.

It is vital that a plan is put in place that sets out how these staff shortages can be addressed. This must be accompanied with the necessary funding. The development and publication of the new NHS 10 Year Plan and the upcoming autumn budget in November is your opportunity to address these issues.

Timely access to diagnostic tests for bowel cancer is key to either preventing the disease or to giving people an opportunity for an earlier diagnosis when it is more treatable and even curable.

But demand for these tests is growing rapidly with at least a million more needed year on year. This is putting endoscopy and pathology services under unprecedented pressure because there simply aren't enough staff to deal with this demand. The current Government initiative to train 400 clinical endoscopists is not enough to plug the gap and as of May 2018, just 130 have been recruited. With NHS hospitals struggling to cope, thousands of patients are waiting longer for potentially lifesaving tests. In fact around half of NHS hospitals in England are now breaching waiting time targets for diagnostic tests and many are relying on expensive external providers.

Unfortunately, the current workforce shortage represents the single biggest barrier to delivering world-class cancer care for bowel cancer patients. For example, the optimal bowel cancer screening programme which the Government has committed to, using the simpler and more accurate screening test (the faecal immunochemical test) at a sensitivity level of 20ug/g for people aged 50-74 has the potential to detect twice as many cancers and four times as many pre-cancerous adenomas. But this would have a significant impact on both colonoscopy and pathology services and has meant the introduction of the new test has been significantly delayed as the workforce is not in place to deliver it sustainably.

That's why we urgently need a fully funded action plan to address these issues. This must be comprehensive and set out clear recommendations that address current workforce shortages and allow for future growth. We urge the Chancellor to ensure that funding is made available to deliver this plan in the forthcoming spending review, including ensuring Health Education England's budget is increased so staff can be recruited and trained.

We strongly believe that a fully funded action plan is essential to transforming diagnostic services, so more bowel cancers can be prevented or diagnosed early. This would ensure that in future bowel cancer is no longer the UK's second biggest cause of cancer related death. You can make this a reality, so we urge you to take action today to address this critical workforce capacity gap.

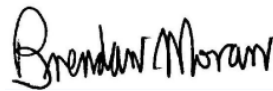
Yours sincerely,

Signed by over 7,000 people

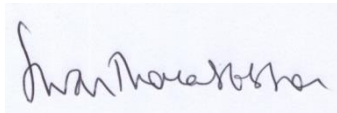
(Please find on enclosed USB stick)



Deborah Alsina MBE
Chief Executive, Bowel Cancer UK



Brendan Moran
President, Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain & Ireland



Siwan Thomas- Gibson
Chair, Joint Advisory Group for GI Endoscopy



George Webster
Vice- President, Endoscopy, British Society of Gastroenterology

Letter endorsed by the following organisations



Bowel Cancer UK Cross Party Letter

Dear Mr Hancock and Mr Hammond,

Re. A capacity crisis in bowel cancer diagnostic services

As a group of cross-party Members of Parliament, we are writing ahead of the Government spending review and the publication of the NHS 10 Year Plan this November to urge you to consider committing funding to support the development of an action plan that addresses staff shortages in bowel cancer diagnostic services.

Timely access to diagnostic tests for bowel cancer is key to either preventing the disease or to giving people an opportunity for an earlier diagnosis when it is more treatable and even curable. But demand for these tests is growing rapidly with at least a million more needed year on year. This is putting endoscopy and pathology services under unprecedented pressure because there simply aren't enough staff to deal with this demand. Current Government initiatives to train 400 clinical endoscopists are welcomed, but will not be enough to plug the gap alone.

Unfortunately this has led to many patients waiting longer for lifesaving tests and around half of hospitals are breaching waiting time targets every month. It is also impacting on initiatives that are vital to ensuring more people are diagnosed early. For example, the introduction of an optimal bowel cancer screening programme that uses the new, more accurate screening test (FIT) and screens from 50, which the Government has committed to, relies heavily on staff being able to carry out more tests.

That's why we urgently need a fully funded action plan to address these issues. This must be comprehensive and set out clear recommendations that address current workforce shortages and allow for future growth. The Treasury and the Department of Health and Social Care must ensure funding is properly allocated so this plan can be implemented.

The imminent Government spending review and development of the NHS 10 Year Plan provides an important opportunity to address this issue. If this is delivered we have a real opportunity to significantly reduce mortality from and incidence of bowel cancer.

We would welcome your commitment to this important programme. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Signed by the following 45 Members of Parliament

Alex Sobel
Leeds North West
Labour Party

Derek Twigg
Halton
Labour Party

Karen Lee
Lincoln
Labour

Andrea Jenkyns
Morley and Outwood
Conservative Party

Dr Paul Williams
Stockton South
Labour Party

Kerry McCarthy
Bristol East
Labour Party

Andrew Slaughter
Hammersmith
Labour Party

Ellie Reeves
Lewisham West and
Penge
Labour Party

Lloyd Russell-Moyle
Brighton, Kemptown
Labour Party

Bambos Charalambous
Enfield Southgate
Labour Party

Emma Hardy
Kingston upon Hull West
and Hessle
Labour Party

Marie Rimmer
St Helens South and
Whiston
Labour Party

Bob Blackman
Harrow East
Conservative Party

Faisal Rashid
Warrington South
Labour Party

Mark Pawsey
Rugby
Conservative Party

Caroline Lucas
Brighton, Pavilion
Green Party

Fiona Bruce
Congleton
Conservative

Matt Western
Warwick and Leamington
Labour Party

Catherine West
Hornsey and Wood Green
Labour Party

Grahame Morris
Easington
Labour Party

Mohammed Yasin
Bedford
Labour Party

Dan Jarvis
Barnsley Central
Labour Party

Helen Hayes
Dulwich and West
Norwood
Labour

Nic Dakin
Scunthorpe
Labour Party

Darren Jones
Bristol North West
Labour Party

Ian Austin
Dudley North
Labour Party

Nigel Evans
Ribbles Valley
Conservative Party

David Drew
Stroud
Labour Party

Jon Cruddas
Dagenham and Rainham
Labour Party

Peter Kyle
Hove
Labour Party

Rachael Maskell

York Central
Labour Party

Ronnie Campbell

Blyth Valley
Labour Party

Sir David Amess

Southend West
Conservative Party

Sir David Crausby

Bolton North East
Labour Party

Sir Peter Bottomley

Worthing West
Conservative Party

Sir Vince Cable

Twickenham
Liberal Democrats

Stephen Lloyd

Eastbourne
Liberal Democrats

Steve Double

St Austell and Newquay
Conservative Party

Steve Pound

Ealing North
Labour Party

Sue Hayman

Workington
Labour Party

Tim Farron

Westmorland & Lonsdale
Liberal Democrats

Tom Brake

Carshalton and
Wallington
Liberal Democrats

Virendra Sharma

Ealing, Southall
Labour Party

Wera Hobhouse

Bath
Liberal Democrats

Yvonne Fovargue

Makerfield
Labour Party