



Welsh Liberal Democrats
Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru



Wales Can Tackle Cancer:

The Welsh Liberal Democrats plan to provide an effective
cancer strategy for Wales

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Foreword

Cancer is a disease that affects everyone. With more than one in three people likely to develop cancer at some time in their lives, we will all be touched by it at some point, whether it is ourselves, our families or our friends.

It's essential that in Wales, we have a cancer strategy that is able to cope with this life altering disease.

A recent report from Cancer Research UK found that Wales is falling behind the rest of the UK when it comes to fighting cancer.

In Wales we have:

- Lower survival rates than the European average
- Higher instances of male cancers than the rest of the UK
- More instances of bowel cancer than the rest of the UK

Yet despite a higher need, we receive a lesser service.

Our report highlights our commitments to tackle a number of the Labour-Plaid government's specific failures relating to cancer :

- Failure to deliver a strong and consistent cancer strategy in Wales.
- Failure to utilise Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy to the fullest extent possible
- Failure to invest in state of the art bowel cancer screening technology.
- Failure to establish a cancer drug fund, resulting in Welsh patients missing out on medicines their English counterparts can access.

These failures just show that the Labour-Plaid government is not providing the cancer service that the people of Wales deserve. The Welsh Liberal Democrats want to see the a National Cancer Plan for Wales.

We must develop an all-encompassing service that is focused on the patient and their family from diagnosis, treatment through to aftercare, remission and palliative care. In short, a service that doesn't stop when the treatment stops.

Before the recession the Labour-Plaid government presided over record spending on the Welsh NHS but what has it bought us? An NHS that has worse outcomes than its English counterpart despite the higher amount of funding per head and a cancer strategy that is lacking compared to the other countries in the UK.

There is no denying that we are living in difficult economic times. Money is scarce and tough decisions have to be made, but cancer is such an important issue that we need to get it right. Through better organisation, by driving efficiencies and seeking and learning from best practice, we can deliver a cancer strategy that not just works, but excels.

Veronica German

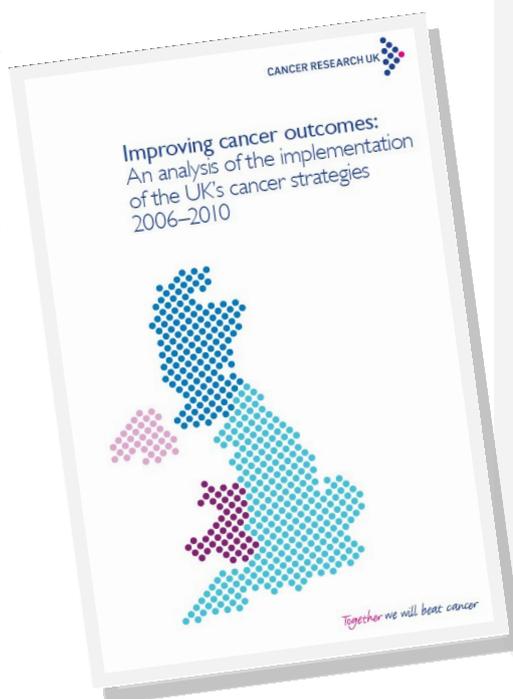
Shadow Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Welsh Liberal Democrats

No Comprehensive Cancer Plan

Cancer Research UK has recently published *Improving cancer outcomes: An analysis of the implementation of the UK's cancer strategies 2006-2010*. The report sought to critically appraise the implementation of the UK's cancer strategies. It highlighted differences between the nations and gaps in the individual plans and identified best practice that can be shared. It also critically appraised how these differences, in terms of plans and delivery, might have an impact on the health of patients.

Cancer Research UK looked closely at the cancer strategies implemented by each country in the UK. England, Scotland and Northern Ireland all fared reasonably well, Wales however was a different story. The report stated that: "A more comprehensive plan should be developed to ensure consistent delivery, implementation and integration across Wales."

In September when Kirsty Williams asked the First Minister if he planned to follow this advice, he failed to provide a satisfactory answer or provide a solid commitment. The Welsh Assembly Government's framework: 'Designed to Tackle Cancer' in 2006 and 'Designed to Tackle Cancer 2' in 2008 left us all hopeful that cancer services in Wales would be greatly improved. However, the deadline for the framework is now upon us. The targets set out in the framework are slipping and some of the cancer standards have not been met. It is crucial that they are updated and modernised to ensure that cancer patients in Wales receive the best possible treatment.



"It is right to say that we have a cancer survival rate in Wales that has historically been below that of Western Europe."

- First Minister, in response to pressure from the Welsh Liberal Democrats in the Assembly.
Plenary 28th September 2010

"A more comprehensive plan should be developed to ensure consistent delivery, implementation and integration across Wales."

- Cancer Research UK report: 'Improving cancer outcomes: An analysis of the implementation of the UK's cancer strategies 2006-2010.'

"Very few cancers have particularly low rates in Wales in comparison with the rest of the UK."

- Cancer Research UK report: 'CancerStats: Incidence UK'

IMRT - Wales Left Behind Again

Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT) allows very accurate treatment of tumours. This is particularly important in the pelvic area and in head and neck cancers where there are a number of organs and structures that could be easily damaged.

Currently, Wales has the capacity to treat fewer than 50 patients a year with this new treatment.

This revolutionary treatment brings with it a number of benefits. Not only does it allow far more accurate treatment and fewer side effects for patients, but it also means that some patients could have curative radiotherapy treatment where they may not have been able to before.

It is also relatively inexpensive, requiring investment from the Welsh Assembly Government of £1million a year according to Cancer Research UK. Investing in newer treatments that are more effective will reduce long term side effects and could, in turn, save money on further care.

In England this treatment has been available for five years and today 42 per cent of cancer patients are receiving this revolutionary treatment. In Wales, only two patients a month who are suffering from head, neck and prostate cancer are receiving this treatment.

There have been major advances in cancer treatments in the past few years and with an estimated one in three people likely to develop a form of cancer in their lifetime† we should have access to the best surgery, radiotherapy and medicines.

The Welsh Assembly Government has a duty to make IMRT available to all patients who would benefit from it as soon as possible. By not making this treatment more accessible The Labour-Plaid government is yet again allowing Wales to fall behind England.

1 in 3 people

Will develop some form of cancer at some point during their lives.†

50

The number of cancer patients treated using IMRT in Wales every year

42%

The percentage of cancer sufferers benefiting from IMRT in England

† <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/keyfacts/Allcancerscombined/#How>

Failure To Invest In High-Tech Screening

In England, the UK government has recently committed £60 million over four years to introduce state of the art screening for bowel cancer. Wales has more incidents of bowel cancer than England. In fact, we have higher levels of male cancers than any other part of the UK and our survival rates in Wales are well below the European average. Despite this we have heard nothing from the Labour-Plaid government about establishing a similar screening programme.

While it is true that Wales is getting closer to the UK average, the fact remains that Welsh citizens are less likely to survive an incidence of cancer than their English counterparts. Good screening programmes are crucial to detect cancer at an early stage, to provide early opportunities for treatment and to ultimately save lives.

The Welsh Assembly Government needs to make earlier detection of cancer a priority for the NHS and this includes embracing new, more effective screening methods. When cancer is detected and diagnosed at an early stage, treatment can be less invasive and more effective and could mean that thousands of cancer deaths are avoided each year. It is also the most cost effective way of treating cancer.

£60 Million

The amount of money the UK government has invested in a state of the art bowel cancer screening programme in England.

629.4

Per 100,000

The number of new cases and rates of males cancers in Wales, compared to 490.3 in England. The highest in the whole of the UK nations¹

Higher levels of cancer in Wales...

		England	Wales	Scotland
Number of cases	Males	123,131	9,151	13,14
	Females	122,196	8,312	14,32
	Persons	245,327	17,463	27,47
Crude rate per 100,000	Males	490.3	629.4	528.
	Females	470.4	544.7	539.
	Persons	480.2	586.0	534.
European standardised	Males	402.5		
	Females	400.0		

Table One: Number of new cases and rates of cancer (all malignant tumours excluding non-melanoma skin cancer), by sex, UK, 2007 — *CancerStats Incidence* Cancer Research UK, Jan 2011

¹Cancer Research UK: 'CancerStats Incidents UK' Published January 2011

No Cancer Drug Fund For Wales

In England the Interim Cancer Drugs Fund was introduced on 1 October 2010 and a full Cancer Drugs Fund will be launched on 1 April 2011. This is designed to enable clinicians to prescribe the cancer treatments which they feel are clinically justified for their patients.

At present, no such policy exists in Wales. According to research by the Rarer Cancer Foundation, as a result of the fund, patients in England are now able to access 20 cancer treatments which are not routinely available to patients in Wales.

This includes treatments for kidney, ovarian, gastric, blood and bone cancers – all rare forms of cancer where there have been few developments in NHS treatment.

This inequality cannot be justified. Why should Welsh cancer patients be denied access, on the NHS, to the same treatments which their counterparts in England will be able to receive? This situation will be deeply upsetting for patients and their families.

The Rarer Cancer Foundation has calculated that introducing a similar policy to that in England would cost approximately £6.2 million a year.

It shouldn't be the case that because you live in Wales you are at a disadvantage when it comes to cancer treatment. It's unjustifiable and completely unacceptable.

20

The number of treatments for rarer cancers that Wales is missing out on thanks to the lack of a Cancer Drug Fund

£6.2 Million

The amount it would cost per year, to fund a cancer drug fund in Wales .

Wales Needs The Whole Package

People are at their most vulnerable, both physically and mentally when they are suffering from an illness such as cancer. We need a cancer service that is there for the patient and their family every step of the way.

Cancer is so much more than just an illness, it affects your life and the lives of the people you care for in unimaginable ways and the cancer service in Wales needs to recognise this.

Roll out the latest IMRT radiotherapy across Wales:

We will strive to get the best possible treatments for the people of Wales. This includes making better use of IMRT which is being used in England on a regular basis. We will also introduce a system similar to the cancer drug fund so we can ensure that the people of Wales receive the same treatment as their English counterparts.

Invest in state of the art screening:

First and foremost we need a strategy that delivers the best treatments possible for the people of Wales. Like the government in England, we will invest in state of the art bowel cancer screening. We recognise that in Wales bowel cancer is a serious problem so the best possible bowel cancer screening programme is essential.

Ensure a personal service that goes the extra mile for patients and families:

A cancer strategy needs to provide services for families as well as patients. We will deliver a service for people whose relationships have been affected by a cancer diagnosis as well as counselling and practical and financial advice. It will offer help to individuals, couples and families who have been affected by a cancer diagnosis. This is exactly the kind of service we should be providing as part of the Welsh NHS as a matter of course.

Tackle inequalities so that Wales has a service comparable to England:

Thanks to the Cancer Drug Fund people in England are getting treatments that we in Wales cant. We would establish a similar fund here in Wales to ensure that no matter where you live in the UK, the best treatments are available to all.

Provide up to date bespoke information for patients and families:

Information is a hugely important factor to those suffering from cancer and their families. It's simply not good enough to be left in the dark. We will ensure that there is more information available in accessible places. People who suffer from cancer really want to 'own' their illness and feel prepared to fight - this means providing clear, straightforward, physical information. We will go beyond just expecting people to search the internet for advice and provide patients with someone to talk to for information.

Promote the mutual support groups so that patients receive the reassurance they need:

Cancer can make people feel truly alone. If you're suffering from cancer or caring for someone with cancer it is all too easy to feel like there's no one to talk to. We feel that a Welsh government should play a bigger part in organising support groups to provide comfort, reassurance or advice. Knowing that there is someone else out there who is going through the same can make the whole process so much easier and aid recovery.

National Cancer Survivorship Programme:

Thousands of people in Wales are living with and beyond cancer and that figure is likely to increase. Many survivors of cancer are left with physical or psychological effects from the diagnosis and treatment of their disease and many more have social, spiritual, financial and informational needs. For those survivors, we are neither identifying their needs, nor meeting them.

The Labour-Plaid government doesn't have a plan to deal with the thousands of survivors of cancer. It is very important that the increasing number of people living with and beyond cancer, their carers and their families have the support and services they need to resume as normal a life when they survive cancer. We would develop a National Cancer Survivorship Programme to help survivors, their carers and their families to deal with the aftereffects of cancer.

Wales can tackle cancer but it needs the government to give it the priority and attention that it deserves. Welsh Liberal Democrats have today set out plans to develop a comprehensive National Cancer Plan for Wales. We will redirect money currently in the NHS budget to fund newer medicines and modern equipment to tackle cancer. We will ensure better facilities to help cut waiting times and improve patients' quality of life



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