Neil Gray MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care

Scottish Government,

St. Andrew’s House,

Regent Road,

Edinburgh,

EH1 3DG

February 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing to you, on behalf of a number of my constituents, about the launch of Pancreatic Cancer UK’s Don’t Write Me Off campaign.

This campaign is backed by a report, a copy of which you can find [here](https://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/PCUK-FasterFairerFunded-report-5MB.pdf). It was brought together by a team of experts, healthcare professionals and people affected by pancreatic cancer, and outlines the state of care for pancreatic cancer patients across the country.

Survival rates have barely improved in 50 years, and this report aims to tackle that by proposing an optimal care pathway for pancreatic cancer. This could be adopted across Scotland to ensure marked improvements in outcomes for people diagnosed with the disease.

**Pancreatic cancer is the deadliest common cancer** – with half of people diagnosed dying within three months, and only 7.3% surviving more than five years. I was shocked to learn that 70% of people diagnosed with this disease receive no treatment between diagnosis and death, an appallingly high amount. Scotland also has one of the worst five-year survivals in the world, ranking 32 of 33 countries with comparable data in [CONCORD-3](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)33326-3/fulltext).

Whilst the Scottish Government is the only government in the UK that has specifically committed to improving pancreatic cancer survival in its cancer plan, we now need urgent action from the government and the NHS. Implementing an optimal care pathway could make a major difference to the lives of people affected by pancreatic cancer. It could double treatment rates and see around 400 more people with pancreatic cancer in Scotland living longer and better lives over the next five years if it was introduced today.

The report sets out recommendations that the government could take to ensure faster, fairer treatment and care for people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. These changes would improve their chances of survival and their quality of life. These include:

* Provide the **long-term funding needed to embed learnings** from the Scottish Diagnostic Pathway Improvement Project.
* Deliver on **the commitment to roll out vague and nonspecific diagnostic pathways** as quickly as possible.
* Implement a **21-day treatment standard** for people with pancreatic cancer from the point of diagnosis to first treatment.

I would be very grateful if you could tell me what plans the Government has to act on the recommendations within this report, and how it plans to improve outcomes and survival rates for people with pancreatic cancer.

I would also ask you to meet with Pancreatic Cancer UK, so they can brief you on their recommendations and discuss how these can be taken forward by the government. Please get in touch with [natasha.johnston@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:natasha.johnston@pancreaticcancer.org.uk) to arrange this.

Many thanks in advance for your support on this vitally important issue.

Yours sincerely,

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