NHS
England

National Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2024

Qualitative report

Things people told us about:

- Their cancer care and treatment
- Things that could be better

What is in this booklet

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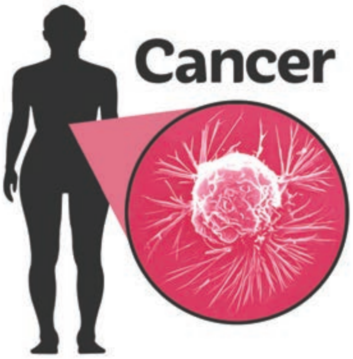
About the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey 2024



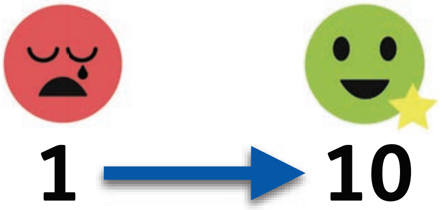
Cancer is a disease people can get. It can be very serious and can make you ill.

Every year, the NHS finds out what cancer patients think about their care and treatment.

We send out a survey. The people who answer the questions have used cancer services.

More than **64 thousand** people did the 2024 survey.

Services can use people’s answers to give better care and support to patients.



Some of the questions asked people to score their care out of 10.

1 meant it was very bad and 10 meant very good.

Some of the questions asked people to write a longer answer.

This report is about those longer answers.

Survey questions

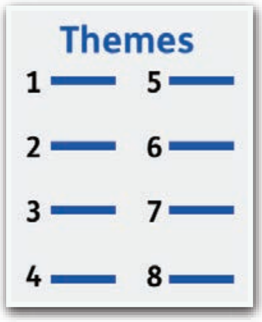
We asked 2 questions where people could answer using their own words:

1. **What was good about your cancer care and treatment?**

2. **Was there anything that could be done better?**

It is hard to collect information from questions like this. We do it by finding **themes**.

Themes are things that stood out to us the most when we looked at everyone’s answers. This was because they affected people a lot.



We found 8 themes.

The rest of this report tells you what people said about each theme.

Theme 1: Gratitude

Gratitude means you are thankful for something. It means a lot to you and you are grateful to have it.

A lot of people were grateful for their care and treatment.

A lot of people said they were happy with their care.

People used words like **excellent** in the survey.

A lot of people wanted to say thank you to the staff who cared for them.

People also said they were thankful for healthcare services in England.

Theme 2: Staff

Staff are a really important part of cancer care.

What staff do affects what people think and feel about their care.

Skills and knowledge

A lot of people were happy with hospital staff.

They felt that staff knew what they were doing and were good at their jobs.

This helped people to feel well looked after and less stressed about their cancer and treatment.

People said they were listened to and treated with respect.

They said it was important to feel involved in conversations about their care.

How staff treat people

A lot of people said staff were kind and caring.

Some people said staff were also friendly and helpful to their family.

A few people said that staff gave them better care and support than they expected.

Other things people told us

A few people told us that they did not feel listened to by healthcare staff.

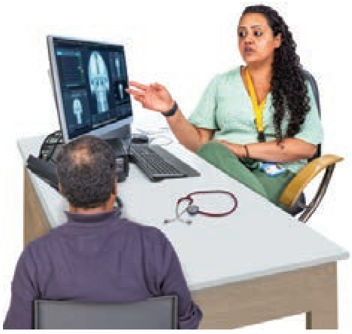
Other people said that some staff had bad attitudes towards patients. Things like being cross or uncaring.

Some people said that staff are too busy, and there are not enough staff on hospital wards.

Not having enough staff meant that care could be rushed. This means there is less time or not enough staff to ask questions.

A few people did not feel they could fully trust the healthcare staff they saw. They wanted to get a **second opinion**.

A **second opinion** is when you ask another doctor what treatments might be best for you.



Theme 3: Diagnosis

A **diagnosis** is when a doctor does some tests and says you have cancer.

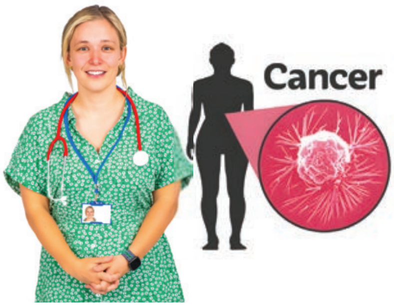
Getting a diagnosis

Finding cancer as soon as possible can make it easier to give you the right care and treatment.

Some people got a diagnosis quickly.

They said their local doctor made a **referral** at the right time.

A **referral** is when your doctor writes a letter to ask another doctor to see you.



The new doctor knows a lot about cancer.

Other people had to wait longer.

This was because of things like:

- They could not get an appointment at their local doctors.

- They were not listened to or taken seriously by their local doctor.

- They were told their cancer was something else.

- They did not get the tests they needed quickly.

- Their local doctor was slow to work out what the problem was or make a referral.

Other people thought their cancer could have been treated more quickly if it was spotted earlier.

Some people said they had used **private healthcare** to get a diagnosis or tests more quickly.

Private healthcare is when you pay to go to see a doctor.

Being told you have cancer

Being told you have cancer can be a big shock. It can make people feel very worried and upset.

People said it is very upsetting to hear you have cancer over the phone.

The **NHS app** is an app you can use on a **smart phone** or a tablet.

A **smart phone** is like a mini computer or tablet but you can use it as a phone too.

You can use the NHS app to do things like make appointments and get information.

Some people said they saw their test results before they were properly told they had cancer. This might be on the NHS app or in a text message.

This caused people to feel very upset.

People said staff need to be more kind and caring when they tell people they have cancer.

Theme 4: Waiting times

Some people said they had to wait a long time for things like:

- Having scans and getting test results.

- A referral.

- Getting a diagnosis.

- Getting an appointment.

- Waiting for an appointment.

- Getting treatment or having an operation.

- Getting medicines.

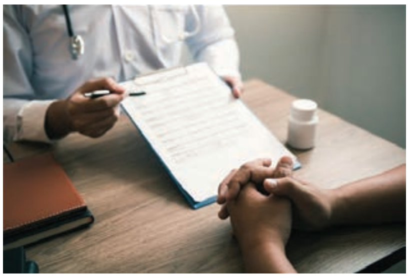
Some people said long wait times made them feel very worried and stressed.

Some people said they had a long wait because there was not enough staff.

Other people were surprised and happy when they did not have to wait very long for tests or treatments.

Theme 5: Getting information

When people have cancer, they are given a lot of information by healthcare staff.



Things like:

- What kind of cancer they have.

- What treatment they are going to have.

- **Side effects** of treatment.
  Side effects are things that might happen to you after having treatment for cancer.

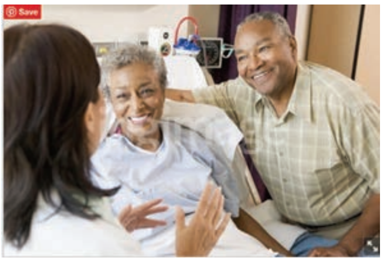
  Things like feeling very tired or losing weight.

Some people said it was helpful to be given leaflets and other written information.

But people said it is important to get information face to face too.

Staff could properly explain things about their cancer, treatment and side effects.

People said it is really important to have time to talk, be listened to and ask questions.



This helped people to feel supported and understand all of the information.

Some people said it can take a long time to get a letter if it comes in the post.

They said email or text is quicker.

People said that healthcare staff and leaflets use too many special or hard words.

These words are often hard for people who are not doctors or nurses to understand.

People wanted information to be clear and easy for people to understand.

How much information people get

Some people said they were given too much information all at once. This made them feel very stressed.

Doctors should understand that they need to give people the right amount of information for them at the right time.

Some people said they had a phone number so they could speak to staff.

They could phone the staff if they had any questions.

But some people said no one answered the phone.

This caused people to feel very upset.

People who did get to speak to staff said it was very helpful.

Theme 6: Working together and sharing information about cancer care

This could be:

- Between local doctors and hospitals.

- Between different hospitals.

- Between services in the same hospital.

Some people said doctors and hospitals need to be better at working together and sharing information.

People did not know things like:

- Who was in charge of their care

- What medicines they should be taking when they came home from hospital.

- Who to contact if they had a problem.

Sometimes people get care and treatment from more than one service or hospital.

Some people told us sharing information was not good enough.

Some people told us they had to pass on information between hospitals and services themselves.

Some people thought that bad information sharing meant they had to wait longer for appointments.

This caused people to feel stressed and upset.

Some people said that **computer systems** in the hospital did not work very well.

A **computer system** is something you can use on a computer.

Hospitals use computer systems for things like collecting information, making appointments and sending letters or emails.

People said that computer systems:

- Had the wrong information for people

and

- Did not share information between hospitals and services properly.

Theme 7: Living with cancer

People told us about their needs when they are not in hospital.

Accident and emergency

Accident and Emergency is an important area at the hospital.
We call it **A&E** for short.

You go to A&E if you are seriously ill or had an accident.

A&E is often very busy. There are often long wait times to see a doctor.

Some people were worried about needing to go to A&E when they had cancer.

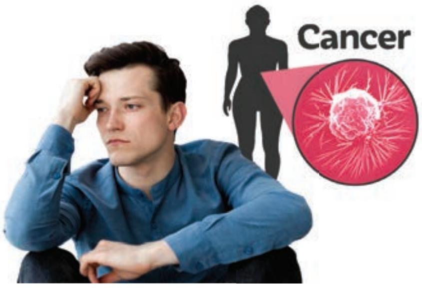
They did not want to catch any illnesses from other people in the waiting area.

People thought cancer patients should have a different area to wait in.

Mental health

Mental health is things like your thoughts, feelings and how you cope in everyday life.

Having cancer can affect your mental health. It can cause you to feel very stressed, worried or sad.

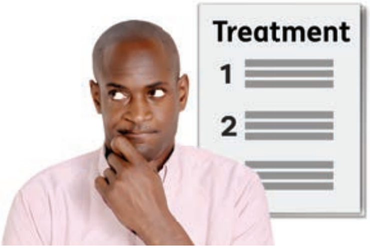


People also worry about the cancer coming back after the treatment finishes.

People said they wanted more support for their mental health.

Going home from hospital

People said they needed more support when they went back home.



They wanted to know what would happen next with their care and treatment.

Some people said they were sent home too quickly.

They did not know what to do if they had any problems.

Some people said they were not contacted by healthcare staff when they went home.

They did not feel cared for or supported.

Some people told us they had to sort out their own care and support after being in hospital.

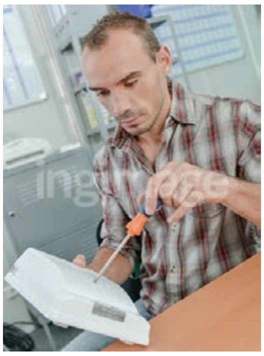
A few people said they had used private healthcare to get the care and support they needed.

Theme 8: Hospitals

People told us about things that affected their care and treatment:

Hospital wards

People said that the hospitals were not very clean.



Sometimes things were missing or things didn't work properly.

Food and drink

Most people who told us about hospital food said it was not very good. There was not much choice.

Some people have trouble eating after cancer treatment.

A few people said the hospital food was not good for people who have to eat certain foods.

This might be people who are vegetarian or people who cannot eat food that has something called gluten in it.

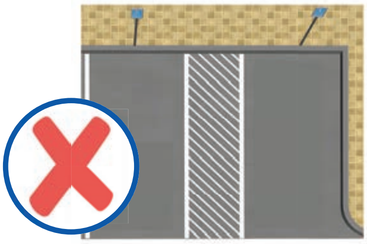
Travel

Some people said they wanted to travel less to get their care and treatment.

Things like:

- Going to a hospital closer to home.

- Having all their treatment in 1 place.



People said there were not enough spaces in the hospital car parks.

Hospital transport helps some patients to travel to hospital and home again.

This could be for an appointment with the doctor.

Or they may have stayed in hospital and are ready to go home.

Some people said that hospital transport could be better.

But other people thought hospital transport was very helpful.

Other things people told us

A few people told us other things about hospitals:

- It is too noisy.

- They wanted friends and family to be able to wait with them when they had treatment.

- They wanted **counselling** for their friends and family. **Counselling** is someone to talk to about your worries or how you are feeling.

- People wanted privacy when talking to doctors. This means being able to talk in a private space with no other people close by.

- People were happy if staff could speak to them in their own language. Things like British Sign Language or Arabic.

- Some people were told they had cancer when they were on their own. They didn't have anyone there to support them.

What will happen now

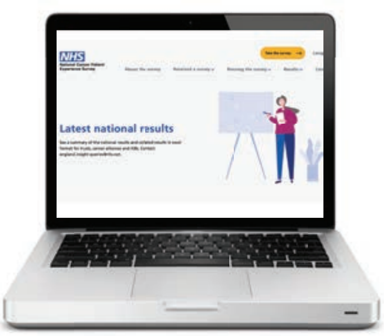
The survey showed lots of good things are happening in cancer care.

But we know there is more work to be done.

Listening to more cancer patients will help us to understand what matters most to people.

This will also help us to understand how to help people in the best way.

More information



This is an easy read version of a bigger report. You can look at the big report on this website:

www.ncpes.co.uk/latest-national-results

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