

'Unacceptable' cancer treatment waiting times condemned as Scottish targets missed again

March 30 2017



Waiting times for cancer patients in Scotland have been described as 'unacceptable' after new figures show that a key target has been missed for the fourth year in a row.

Health boards should ensure at least 95% of patients urgently referred with a suspicion of [cancer](#) will wait a maximum of 62 days from referral to starting treatment.

But [figures](#) show that only 87.5% of patients started treatment within the target time in the last 3 months of 2016. This means that hundreds of patients are waiting longer than they should for treatment.

Gregor McNie, Cancer Research UK's senior public affairs manager in Scotland, said that the latest figures show once again a worrying picture for cancer services.

"Speedy diagnosis and access to treatment is key to improving someone's chances of survival so it's absolutely critical we see improvements soon," he said.

The target was met by only 5 out of 15 health boards in Scotland.

Another target, which states that 95% of patients will wait no more than 31 days from deciding they need treatment to first receiving that cancer treatment, was also missed.

"Over a year on from when the Scottish Government announced its new cancer strategy , it's clear many health boards need to make better progress, and show progress from new investments," said McNie.

He added that a review of the targets was due.

Scottish Health Secretary, Shona Robison, said the Scottish Government has already announced a number of changes including "reforming outpatient services, streamlining access to cancer specialists and decreasing the time it takes to get a diagnosis."

But Scottish Labour [health](#) spokesman Anas Sarwar said the "shameful" figures "show that for four years the SNP have failed families across the country, and the performance is getting worse."

The cancer statistics were also heavily criticised by the other opposition parties.

Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron said: "It's inexcusable for the SNP to just continually brush these missed targets aside, especially when it's well-known that receiving swift [treatment](#) for cancer can often make all the difference in improving outcomes for these patients."

But the Scottish Liberal Democrats said that after repeatedly missing this [target](#), ministers need to be clear about what they will do differently in order to meet their commitments to [patients](#) in future.

The Scottish Green Party added: "The NHS workforce is under huge pressure and we need Scottish ministers to prioritise efforts to recruit and retain additional staff."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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