



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

www.craigwhittakermp.co.uk

Breast Cancer Now

Thank you for contacting me about breast cancer.

It is important that every effort is made to continue raising awareness of breast cancer, and tackle this disease, which has taken so many lives over the years.

In 2015, Public Health England launched Be Clear on Cancer, a national scheme which, I am pleased to say, has significantly improved awareness of breast cancer in women over 70, who account for roughly 1 in 3 cases of breast cancer. Breast cancer survival rates have improved remarkably over the last 40 years, and this is testament to the efforts made to raise awareness of, and boost funding into tackling this disease.

I know that ministers are making great efforts to improve cancer services, and ensure that the NHS provides some of the world's best cancer care. The NHS has launched the National Cancer Programme which is committed to offering uniquely tailored cancer treatment to all patients with breast cancer by 2020. It is working closely with Health Education England and Macmillan Cancer Support to understand the best ways of developing and implementing cancer services by the same date.

You may be interested to know that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is updating its guidelines on the diagnosis and management of breast cancer. These guidelines will cover the use of adjuvant bisphosphonates and other cancer drugs, and will be published in July 2018.

I appreciate your concern regarding the age at which mandatory mammograms are offered by the NHS. Mandatory mammograms play a key part in the early diagnosis of breast cancer, which is central to the Government's ambition of achieving world-class cancer outcomes. The breast cancer screening programme is currently offered to all women between the ages of 50 and 70. You may be encouraged to hear that the NHS is trialling expanding compulsory screening to women aged between 47 and 73. This trial began in 2009 and is expected to run until the mid-2020s, until the NHS has sufficient information to understand its effectiveness. Figures from Cancer Research UK show a significant increase in the incidence of breast cancer in women in their mid-40s, and very low rates of occurrence in those under the age of 30. I believe it is appropriate that the NHS is looking at expanding the screening process, whilst ensuring resources are allocated wisely, and directed towards those women most likely to be at risk of contracting breast cancer.

I believe these developments will significantly improve patient experience and quality of care. The NHS is implementing the independent Cancer Taskforce's recommendation that all breast cancer patients shall receive access to a Clinical Nurse Specialist, or other key workers. This will enable greater detection of any recurrence or secondary breast cancer, and enable a quick and effective return to care.

This is part of the NHS's ambitious wider strategy to improve cancer outcomes, and save 30,000 lives per year by 2020.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Craig Whittaker MP