

# National Cancer Plan for England: Reducing cancer risk & improving outcomes

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## Background

The Government's National Cancer Plan for England aims for 75% of people diagnosed from 2035 to be cancer-free or living well five years after diagnosis.

World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) strongly welcomes its ambition on survival, early diagnosis and patient experience. However, up to 40% of cancers are preventable, and stronger, sustained action on tobacco, alcohol, diet, obesity and physical inactivity will be essential to reducing incidence, tackling inequalities and easing long-term pressure on the NHS.

Prevention is referenced in the Plan but is unfortunately not embedded as a core pillar alongside treatment and survival. While the Plan also sets a strong foundation for improved survival and patient experience, implementation must robustly integrate prevention and action on modifiable risk factors. Doing so will not only reduce cancer incidence but will improve survivorship, recovery, and quality of life — making the core ambition of the Plan genuinely achievable and sustainable.

## Priorities for implementation

1. Prevention to be embedded in wider strategies across Government
2. Implementation of a National Alcohol Strategy for England alongside the National Cancer Plan for England and 10-Year Health Plan
3. Improved protection and promotion of breastfeeding
4. Review of conflicts of interest when it comes to engaging with the food and alcohol industries
5. Improved diet and physical activity support for those living with or beyond cancer
6. Increased investment in prevention research



## WCRF welcomes

1. An ambitious long-term survival target.
2. Stronger emphasis on early diagnosis and screening.
3. Improved personalised care and pre/rehabilitation support.
4. Action on illegal sunbed use, commitment to a smoke-free generation, and expansion of HPV vaccination.
5. Use of digital tools to support screening and prevention.
6. Focus on addressing health inequalities.

## 3 powerful actions you can take as a Parliamentarian:

1. Table PQs to press the Government for an update on how the prevention components of the National Cancer Plan for England are being implemented. **WCRF can provide PQs.**
2. Recognise and reject industry lobbying techniques and commit to protecting public health over profits.
3. Promote the health objectives under the National Food Strategy and join calls for a Good Food Bill.

## Priorities for implementation and oversight

With the National Cancer Plan now published, the focus must shift to implementation with clear accountability. Strengthening prevention must also be a core focus and one that Parliamentarians can support by calling for:

### 1. Prevention to be embedded in wider strategies across Government

- a. Ensure delivery of the National Cancer Plan is aligned with the 10-Year Health Plan and the health objectives outlined in the National Food Strategy, with shared aims, measurable targets and clear accountability mechanisms.
- b. Drive forward the House of Lords 'Recipe for Health' report recommendations and commit to a Good Food Bill to fix our failing food system and ensure affordable and nutritious food for all.
- c. Complement the use of GLP-1s with prevention interventions, fostering equitable access to both.
- d. Push for the National Physical Activity Strategy to be published.
- e. Ensure that prevention indicators (tobacco, alcohol, obesity, diet and physical activity) are included in annual reports by the National Cancer Board to measure progress.
- f. Establish a cross-government working group (including DHSC, HM Treasury, DfE, DEFRA and DCMS) to coordinate action on cancer prevention and address commercial, fiscal and regulatory levers consistently.

### 2. Implementation of a National Alcohol Strategy for England alongside the National Cancer Plan for England

- a. Deliver robust mandatory alcohol labelling, which includes a health warning on cancer and nutritional information, at pace.
- b. Implement Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) in England and marketing restrictions across the UK to complement mandatory alcohol labelling as part of a National Alcohol Strategy for England.
- c. Introduce measures to reduce alcohol consumption among cancer survivors, which can impact treatment effectiveness and increase recurrence risks.

### 3. Improved protection and promotion of breastfeeding

- a. Push for the swift implementation of the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMAs) package of recommendations aimed at addressing excessively high infant formula prices and inappropriate marketing practices.
- b. Ensure full implementation and enforcement of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes across NHS and public health systems.

### 4. Closer scrutiny of engagement with the food and alcohol industries

- a. Monitor industry lobbying and ensure transparency in policymaking processes affecting cancer prevention and other non-communicable diseases.
- b. Safeguard public health policy from conflicts of interest, adopting WHO guidelines on engagement with health-harming industries. Fundamentally, policy development must be protected from vested interests.

5. **Improved diet and physical activity support for those living with or beyond cancer**
  - a. Ensure prehabilitation and rehabilitation commitments are delivered across the country ensuring equal access for all patients.
  - b. Ensure those living with or beyond cancer have access to expert nutrition and physical activity advice along the NHS cancer treatment pathway and in primary care settings.
  - c. Ensure healthcare professionals are trained to provide effective prevention and survivorship advice and provided with evidenced-based resources, such as those developed by WCRF.
6. **Increased investment in prevention research**
  - a. Support increased funding for research on modifiable cancer risk factors and implementation science.

## Conclusion

As implementation commences, Parliamentarians play a crucial role in holding the Government to account, particularly in ensuring prevention is not overshadowed by diagnosis or treatment delivery.

Embedding strong, evidence-based prevention measures alongside survival goals will be essential to reducing cancer incidence, tackling inequalities and securing the long-term sustainability of NHS cancer services.

We would be delighted to provide you with any support or further information on the above, please contact [policy@wcrf.org](mailto:policy@wcrf.org) if that is of interest. Further information on our UK policy work can also be found in our [‘Policy Priorities to Prevent Cancer’](#) leaflet.



## About World Cancer Research Fund

World Cancer Research Fund examines how diet, weight and physical activity impacts the risk of developing and surviving cancer. As part of an international network of charities, we have been funding life-saving research, influencing global public health policy and educating the public since 1982. While society continues searching for a cure, our prevention and survival work is helping people live longer, happier and healthier lives – free from the devastating effects of cancer.

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