

Government 25% below cancer treatment target as charity says 20,000 deaths a year avoidable

The latest NHS data has revealed that just 61.3% of cancer patients are starting treatment within 62-days. The government's target is 85%, which has not been met since 2015.

Cancer patients need to be seen as quickly as possible to give them the best chance of survival but the government's failure to meet this target is putting people's lives at risk.

The number of patients not beginning their treatment within 62-days has risen by nearly 1,000 to 17,166, up from 16,168 in the first quarter of the year. That represents a spike of over 6% of patients not starting their treatment within that time frame in just three months.



It comes as Cancer Research UK has said that at least 20,000 cancer deaths a year could be avoided in the UK with further action and the charity also said that the UK lags behind comparable countries for survival.

At every turn the Conservatives have pushed the NHS further into crisis: they've failed to recruit enough GPs, failed to recruit the cancer workforce we need and failed to ensure that everyone has access to the treatment they

need.

The Liberal Democrats have set out proposals to invest an extra £4 billion in NHS cancer treatment over the next five years to deliver this plan and improve survival rates by the end of the next Parliament.

This plan includes a legal right to be given to all cancer patients to ensure they begin treatment within the 62-days, passing a Cancer Survival Act to ensure funding for research into the cancers with the lowest survival rates, and halting the closure of the National Cancer Research Institute.

Back Our Cancer Care Plan

Ed Davey has announced a new five-year plan to boost cancer survival rates.

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1 in 3 miss work while waiting for healthcare

A new poll, commissioned by the Liberal Democrats, has found that one in three working adults say they have missed work in the last year while waiting for a medical appointment or treatment on the NHS.

It's outrageous that so many patients have been left to suffer as a result of this Conservative Government's neglect. Thousands of people are waiting an appalling length of time to start treatment, with countless more desperately trying to get hold of their GP to no avail.

Over half of young adults say they've been forced to miss work in the past year due to soaring health waiting lists, including seeing GPs.

Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt's failure to get a grip on the crisis in our NHS is having a detrimental effect on the entire country. Millions battling health conditions have been left in limbo and our economy is suffering as a result.

The impact of healthcare waits

The devastating poll reveals reasons for missing work in the past year

include:

- One in five working adults say that they have been unable to go to work while waiting to see their GP.
- One in seven say they've had to take a significant length of time off work as they wait for NHS treatment or surgery for a health condition.
- Just over one in ten missed work while stuck waiting for an emergency dental appointment.

These treatment backlogs and an alarming shortage of GP appointments are damaging economic growth and will continue to impact both the economy and people's quality of life without a significant rescue package.

This Conservative Government cannot continue to turn a blind eye. It's clear that growth is not possible unless we first tackle the ever-growing NHS treatment and GP backlogs that are holding millions of people back and having a devastating impact on quality of life.



Liberal Democrats are calling on the Government to use the Autumn Statement to invest that extra £13bn into the NHS to deliver on a robust series of measures to support the health service through this winter and longer term.

This includes recruiting 8,000 more GPs, reversing Conservative cuts to vital public health services in local communities and funding 200 new radiotherapy machines.

Sunak removes NHS from top 5 pledges

Rishi Sunak has omitted the NHS from his newly-announced priorities.

By officially de-prioritising the NHS, Rishi Sunak has shown yet again just how out of touch he is.

The Prime Minister clearly doesn't care about the millions of people across the country on hospital waiting lists or the families and pensioners struggling to get appointments with a GP or dentist.

Shockingly, the Prime Minister doesn't even understand the link between a better health service and a stronger economy. Any strategy for economic growth must have a strategy for better healthcare, yet the Conservatives clearly don't understand that.

A GP guarantee

Back our plan make sure people can see their GP within a week, or within 24 hours if in urgent need.

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Transgender Day of Remembrance

Today is Trans Day of Remembrance – an important opportunity to remember those who have lost their lives to transphobia, and reflect on how we as a society can end this loss of life.

In decades past, the UK has led the world in advancing human equality for all LGBT+ people – with the Liberal Democrats playing a particularly key role in driving that forward.

But in recent years, progress has stalled and even gone backwards. I'm deeply concerned to see such a vulnerable group of people being dragged into a manufactured culture war.

We cannot forget the chilling impact this has on people's lives, either. Like the fact that last year, transphobic hate crimes in England and Wales hit a [record high](#). Or the heartbreaking [reality](#) that nine in ten young trans adults have had suicidal thoughts – a much higher proportion than the wider population.

Today, my thoughts are with everyone in the trans community who have already lost their lives. Like Brianna Ghey, a 16 year old trans girl who was tragically killed earlier this year. And Alice Litman, who had been waiting more than three years for gender-affirming healthcare when she passed.

Let me be clear – Liberal Democrats will always stand up for the rights of everyone in the LGBT+ community, including trans people.

There is still a long way to go to achieve true equality for the trans community, but Liberal Democrats will keep fighting. We owe it to Brianna, Alice and everyone else we have lost.

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An immediate bilateral ceasefire in Israel and Gaza

As Liberal Democrats, we have always stood in support of a lasting peace and a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine. In the face of the horrific violence of the last few weeks, we are clear that a lasting peace is the only way to guarantee the dignity and security which both Palestinians and Israelis deserve.

Hamas' terrorist attacks on October 7th shocked the world. We condemned them and the taking of hostages, unequivocally. Hamas cannot, for the security of Israelis nor the future of Palestinians, be allowed to continue in charge of Gaza.

Right now we have a disaster. When I met with NGOs working on the ground in Gaza, they told me just how devastating a humanitarian catastrophe we are facing.

Thousands of innocent civilians have already been killed, including thousands of children. I met the Palestinian Ambassador just days ago – tragically he had lost family members. I passed on my condolences on behalf of the Liberal Democrats to all Palestinians.

And the humanitarian crisis just seems to get worse. Essential supplies like water, food, medicine and fuel still remain in very short supply or totally cut off from Gaza. And 200 people are still held hostage, including children. And the risk of regional escalation grows by the day, underlined by the fact that the UK withdrew diplomatic staff from Lebanon earlier this week.

More than a month since Hamas' atrocities, it is increasingly clear that a

military solution to eliminate Hamas is not possible. Nor is it tenable for Israel to reoccupy Gaza.

Only a sustained political and diplomatic solution will resolve this conflict and deliver a lasting peace. We urgently need movement towards that solution now.

But how? The answer is via an immediate bilateral ceasefire.

It is important to be clear. Some who call for a ceasefire really seem to mean freezing the conflict. But that's not acceptable. It leaves Hamas in place in Gaza.

My meeting with families whose loved ones are, right now, being held hostage in Gaza made it very clear to me that such an outcome is unacceptable. And so too is it unacceptable for Palestinians. They deserve a state of their own, and security, just as Israelis do too.

Freezing the conflict doesn't look to the future and will do nothing to bring about that long term security.

That's why a ceasefire cannot be an end in itself, even though it is very clearly needed now to stop the bloodshed and trauma for Palestinians and Israelis. It is temporary by its very definition: it is a step towards peace. And it is contingent upon both parties sticking to it. If one party breaks the ceasefire, a military option remains on the table.

I am not naive about the difficulties involved in getting to this position – it may require a cessation in hostilities, as we have already called for, to create the basis for a ceasefire, and we welcome any progress however small towards this goal, including the hours in specific areas committed to by Israel. Nor will it be easy to rid Gaza of Hamas.

Maximum pressure now needs to be applied on all parties, with tough conditions carefully monitored and verified. That will require a huge and sustained effort from the international community and the UN, with a particular role to be played by Arab neighbours.

Our job – and the job of the whole international community – is to bring an end to this conflict, and stop the killing of thousands of innocent civilians, while ensuring that we do not return to how things were before October 7th.

Movement towards a political solution, putting us back on the path to two states, is needed more than ever.

Right now, we simply cannot afford not to try.

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Islamophobia Awareness Month

Today marks the beginning of Islamophobia Awareness Month – where we acknowledge the anti-Muslim hatred that is too prevalent in our society, and reflect on how we can stamp it out in all its forms.

This year, Islamophobia Awareness Month coincides with an incredibly difficult time for Muslim communities here in the UK. **The reverberations of the horrifying Israel-Gaza conflict have led to an unacceptable rise in both Antisemitism and Islamophobia across our country.**

The figures are stark. Anti-Islamophobic organisation Tell Mama received 515 reports of anti-Muslim incidents between just 7th and 29th October – a sevenfold increase from the same period in 2022. Similarly, the Metropolitan police has recorded a 140% increase in Islamophobic offences this month compared to the same period last year.

And the stories accompanying these statistics are just as disturbing. From reports of Muslim communities being targeted at public transport hubs, to concerns raised with me by my local mosque.

We cannot let this type of hate fester.

There is simply no place for Islamophobia in our society, in any form. And it's incumbent on all of us with a public platform to stand up against hatred of all kinds, including Islamophobia, Antisemitism, and racism.

I'm proud of the work that Liberal Democrats have done to combat religious hatred, and will continue to do. In light of recent events, many of our calls now feel even more timely.

Like giving law enforcement the resources and training they need to identify and prevent hate crimes, including threats and incitement to violence on social media. And providing funding for protective security measures to public spaces that are vulnerable to hate crime, like places of worship, schools and community centres.

Now more than ever, it is vital that we stand up against all forms of Islamophobia, and work together to end religious hatred everywhere.

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