

27 January 2017

Thank you for contacting me about bowel cancer.

I appreciate your concerns as I know that bowel cancer is one of the most common types of cancer diagnosed in the UK. Over eight in ten cases of bowel cancer occur in the over 60s and I agree that early diagnosis is key.

Under the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme in England, people aged 60-74 years old are sent a home testing kit every two years. Those aged above the eligible age limit are also able to self-refer for screening. As part of the Programme, a new test is being introduced which is easier to complete and it is hoped that 200,000 more people per year will take up the opportunity to be screened. An additional one-off bowel scope screening test is also being introduced for those aged 55 years old.

All hospital trusts are able to offer screening for patients if clinically appropriate. New guidelines by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence published in June 2015 state that GPs should offer screening for those who are aged 50 and over presenting with relevant symptoms.

Cancer survival rates in the UK have never been higher, however, I am aware that there is still more to be done. The Government is working with the NHS, charities and patient groups to deliver the new cancer strategy developed by the independent Cancer Taskforce. By 2020, everyone urgently referred with a suspicion of cancer will receive either a definitive diagnosis or the all-clear within four weeks.

The £1.2 billion Cancer Drugs Fund has helped over 95,000 people and I continue to support the Government's commitment to increase NHS spending in England by £10 billion in real terms by 2020/21.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP