

Open letter from cancer charities to the public

Tomorrow in England we will see Covid restrictions lifted, with people will no longer required to wear face masks in crowded places or maintain social distance.

Many people will be looking forward to tomorrow as the day they get their “freedoms back”. But for many people with cancer, tomorrow will be a day when freedoms are taken away. This is because their cancer, or their treatment for cancer, means the vaccine, even after two doses, is less likely to protect them from serious illness from Covid than it is for the general public.

Over the last few months, many people with cancer have been starting to get back to normal, meeting up with their friends outdoors or sitting outside at cafes and restaurants.

They have felt able to do this because the people around them have been wearing masks and keeping their distance. The more people exercise their freedom to stop wearing masks and stop social distancing, the more people with cancer will feel they have to stop their normal activities, and will feel more worried when they have to do things like use public transport.

We had hoped the Government would continue to insist people carry on wearing masks and social distancing in crowded places. But given the Government has decided not to do this, we are asking every person in England, knowing you already do so much for people cancer through the financial support you give us, to do three things to help them further over the next few weeks:

- Keep wearing masks in crowded places. There is good evidence they stop the spread, and for all you know, that person sitting a few seats down from you on the bus might be on their way to their chemotherapy appointment.
- Keep your distance from people you don't know. There is no way of knowing if someone has cancer and so might be vulnerable to the virus, so it's best to assume everyone you come into contact with might be.
- Get vaccinated if you haven't done so already. Particularly for people with cancer who have a compromised immune system, the more people who are vaccinated, the safer they will be.

These three things are especially important in England, where the restrictions are being lifted first. But they are also things will help people with cancer in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, too.

Just one person doing these three things could make a real difference to someone with cancer. And the more of us who do them, the more we will help keep people with cancer safe, and send them a message of solidarity during the difficult weeks ahead.

Michelle Mitchell, CEO, Cancer Research UK
Delyth Morgan, CEO, Breast Cancer Now
Gemma Peters, CEO, Blood Cancer UK
Lynda Thomas, CEO, Macmillan Cancer Support
Fiona Hazell, CEO, Leukaemia UK

Diana Jupp, CEO, Pancreatic Cancer UK
Michelle Vickers, CEO, Head and Neck Cancer Foundation
Victoria Clare, CEO, Ovacome
Zack Pemberton-Whiteley, CEO, Leukaemia Care
Laura Kerby, CEO, Myeloma UK
Pamela Healy OBE, CEO, British Liver Trust
Ropinder Gill, CEO, Lymphoma Action
Nina Barough CBE, CEO, Walk The Walk
Annwen Jones OBE, CEO, Target Ovarian Cancer
Liz Darlison, CEO, Mesothelioma UK
Rose Woodward, CEO, Kidney Cancer Support Network
Samantha Dixon, CEO, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust
Tony Heddon, Chairman, Neuroblastoma UK
Robin Pritchard & Paula Hargadon, Co-Directors, Cancer Care Map
Marc Auckland, Chair, CLL Support
Sue Farrington Smith, CEO, Brain Tumour Research
Athena Lamnisos, CEO, The Eve Appeal
Sarahjane Robertson, CEO, Look Good Feel Better
Jeannie Rigby, Director, Action Bladder Cancer UK
Jane Lyons, CEO, Cancer52
Richard Davidson, CEO, Sarcoma UK
Paula Chadwick, CEO, Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation
Tina Seymour, CEO, Hope for Tomorrow
Gillian Nuttall, CEO, Melanoma UK
Ken Mastris, Chairman, Tackle Prostate Cancer
Anna Webb, Manager, Myrovlytis Trust
Cary Wakefield, CEO, Ovarian Cancer Action
Alastair Richards, CEO, North West Cancer Research
Nigel Shattock, Director of Comms, World Cancer Research Fund
Kathryn Scott, CEO, Yorkshire Cancer Research
Dr David Jenkinson, CEO, The Brain Tumour Charity
Nick Turkentine, CEO, Kidney Cancer UK
Natalie Heskell, CEO CoppaFeel!
Henny Braund, CEO, Anthony Nolan
Genevieve Edwards, CEO, Bowel Cancer UK

