

**PE1783/A**

Children with Cancer UK submission of 31 March 2020

Children with Cancer UK strongly supports the above petition, submitted by Fiona Govan, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise public awareness of harder to treat childhood cancers and to provide additional funding to finding cures.

Children with Cancer UK is one of the UK's leading funders of research into childhood cancer. Our charity's mission is to improve early diagnosis, improve survival rates and the quality of survival in young cancer patients, and to find ways to prevent cancer in the future. In addition, we raise awareness and support families with our welfare projects. Since 1988, Children with Cancer UK has raised over £250 million to support research into the causes and treatment of childhood cancers, and to provide better facilities for caring for children and their families.

There are around 1,900 new cases of cancer in children in the UK every year and incidence rates have increased by 15% in the UK between 1993-1995 and 2014-2016\*. While the past 30 years have witnessed great strides in diagnosis and treatment of some childhood cancers, with five-year survival rates for leukaemia and lymphomas increasing to 86% and 90% respectively, children suffering from rarer and more difficult to treat cancers have been left behind. There remains a great unmet need for these patients.

Brain tumours claim more lives than any other childhood cancer. Together, brain and spinal tumours make up 26% of children's cancers but only have a 73% five-year survival rate. For those that survive, the outlook is discouraging, with up to two thirds of survivors left with moderate to severe disabilities. Meanwhile osteosarcoma accounts for just over half of childhood bone tumours, with approximately 30 new cases each year in the UK. Despite some advances in treatment, osteosarcoma still has amongst the lowest survival rates of all the childhood cancers at just 65%. If the cancer is not diagnosed quickly and metastasis sets in, the five-year survival rate falls to around 30%.

A lack of general awareness of the different childhood cancers among parents and GPs means that diagnosis is often delayed time and time again, often until the child is admitted to A and E, with devastating consequences. For rarer cancers, improvement in survival is further hampered by the lack of financial incentive for industry to develop kinder and more effective treatments. Thus, support from the government and charities to raise public awareness and increase funding for vital research into harder to treat cancers is crucial to improving outcomes for these children.

We wish to thank Fiona Govan for taking the brave action to submit this petition and we are available to the Scottish Parliament for further comment.