

PE1783/F

Scottish Government submission of 25 November 2020

Thank you for your letter of 29 October 2020 on behalf of the public Petitions Committee regarding Petition PE1783 on raising public awareness and funding for childhood cancers with low survival rates.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that this is a very important policy area and it is critical to strike a balance between promoting awareness of signs and symptoms and understanding that these symptoms do not automatically point to cancer.

To make the Petitions Committee aware, the Scottish Government has already taken a number of actions to continue to provide parents with valuable information about childhood cancers. As a starting point, Parent Club offers up-to-date guidance from the Scottish Government on children's health and education. It has a link to the NHS Inform signs and symptoms of childhood cancer.

In order to proactively raise awareness, future iterations of the Personal Child Health Record, also known as the PCHR or 'red book' will include an insert on childhood cancer: <https://www.gkcct.org/knowthesigns>

In addition, Glow Gold childhood cancer awareness campaign group were invited to provide input to the redesigned Ready Steady Baby publication. Ready Steady Baby is the comprehensive guide to pregnancy, birth and parenthood covering the period of pregnancy up until baby is 8 weeks old. The publication includes key signs and symptoms of childhood illness.

Lastly, the Scottish Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer, initially published in 2007, has recently undergone a refresh throughout 2018. The Guidelines support GPs in identifying patients who are most likely to have cancer and therefore require urgent assessment by a specialist. Equally, the Guidelines help in identifying patients who are unlikely to have cancer, embedding safety netting as a diagnostic support tool.

Funded by the Scottish Government's Detect Cancer Early (DCE) Programme, and lead by Dr Peter Hutchison, former Chair of the Scottish Primary Care Cancer Group, supported by Macmillan Cancer Support and Healthcare Improvement Scotland, the latest Clinical Review focused on eight pathways including Children, Teenagers and Young Adults. One of the several changes reflected in the revised Guidelines, published January 2019, is a reference to an awareness card identifying warning symptoms and signs of childhood cancers produced by the Grace Kelly Ladybird Trust, which is a useful resource for parents.

I hope this response reassures the Committee of the steps the Scottish Government has and will continue to take to raise awareness of childhood cancers.