

# Earlier and more accurate diagnosis for people with sarcoma

Anyone with the signs and symptoms of sarcoma needs to be seen as early as possible and referred to services that can quickly and accurately confirm the diagnosis. Doing this can save lives.

## 1 in 4

Awareness is poor. Only 1 in 4 people in the UK know what sarcoma is.

## 35%

More than a third (35%) of sarcoma patients saw a healthcare professional three times or more before being referred for tests.

## 1 in 6

One in 6 people (17%) waited more than a year to receive an accurate diagnosis.

## 22%

A fifth (22%) of sarcoma patients were told their symptom(s) were not serious at their first healthcare appointment.

## Why is this important?

- Sarcoma is an uncommon cancer that has vague symptoms, often a growing, possibly painful lump, or bone pain. As these symptoms can be attributed to other things, such as sporting injuries or growing pains, the patient may not think about visiting their doctor.
- Even if they spot something of concern, GPs may not associate the symptoms with sarcoma; most GPs will only see one case of sarcoma in their career.
- The later a sarcoma is diagnosed, the worse the outcome for the patient. Despite time being of the essence, on average sarcomas are diagnosed when they are about the same size as a can of beans.

**“Being left in limbo, not knowing if they have cancer, or what type of sarcoma they have, has a significant emotional toll.”**

- Despite early diagnosis being key, we do not currently have accurate staging data. The NHS Long Term Plan aims that by 2028, the proportion of cancer patients diagnosed at stages 1 and 2 should rise from around half currently to three-quarters. However, since it is estimated that only around a quarter of sarcoma patients are given a stage (compared to over 90% in breast and lung cancers), there is not an accurate picture of the stage at which sarcomas are diagnosed.
- Being left in limbo, not knowing if they have cancer, or what type of sarcoma they have, has a significant emotional toll. The longer it took for people to receive an accurate diagnosis, and the more times they saw a healthcare professional before being diagnosed, the more likely they are to experience anxiety.

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## Our priorities

1. Be the driving force to improve public awareness of sarcoma's signs and symptoms, working alongside the government and arms-length bodies.
  2. Push to improve knowledge and awareness around the signs and symptoms of sarcoma in primary care, such as GPs, community nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists and emergency department workers.
  3. Lobby the government and arms-length bodies to ensure that there is a well-staffed, diagnostic workforce for sarcoma.
  4. Partner with the clinical community to increase the quantity and quality of staging data for sarcomas in the UK.
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**“We know that the routes to diagnoses are complicated and lengthy for sarcoma. For less common cancers where symptoms might be vague, or where they can develop in any part of the body like sarcoma, it makes it even more essential to have any suspicious symptoms looked at as soon as possible.”**

**Richard Davidson, Chief Executive of Sarcoma UK**