

Cancer Care Opinion Analysis

Stakeholder Discussion Document

Purpose of this Discussion Document

This document has been developed to support discussion amongst cancer service leaders, clinicians, nurses, patient experience teams, quality improvement leads and system partners.

The findings are based upon analysis of over 114,000 cancer-related patient stories and comments submitted through Care Opinion over approximately twenty years.

The objective is not to judge services but to help identify:

- What patients value most.
- Where services appear strongest.
- Where patients report the greatest challenges.
- Opportunities for improvement.
- Potential areas for further investigation.

The document should be used as a discussion aid alongside local intelligence, patient feedback, operational data and clinical experience.

Executive Summary

Analysis of 114,751 cancer-related patient comments suggests that patients consistently value:

Strongest Positive Themes

1. Compassion and kindness
2. Staff attitudes and behaviour
3. Practical support and service navigation

These areas generate the most consistently positive patient feedback and appear to represent significant strengths across cancer services.

Main Areas of Concern

Patients report the greatest challenges in:

1. Palliative and end-of-life care
2. Diagnosis experience
3. Treatment delivery and side-effects
4. Mental health support
5. Timeliness and responsiveness

Importantly, these themes become more negative when adjusted for the significance of individual patient experiences, suggesting that some of the most impactful events occur within these parts of the cancer pathway.

Discussion Topic 1

Compassion and Kindness

What Patients Are Telling Us

Compassion and kindness generated the most positive feedback across all themes.

Patients frequently describe:

- Staff going above and beyond.
- Feeling cared for during difficult periods.
- Emotional reassurance.
- Human connection during treatment and recovery.

Many patients describe individual staff members as making a significant difference to their overall experience.

Discussion Questions

1. What currently works well within our organisation?
2. How do we recognise and support compassionate care?
3. Are there areas where staff pressures may be affecting patient experience?
4. How can positive behaviours be shared across teams?

Potential Actions

- Recognition programmes.
 - Sharing examples of excellent practice.
 - Staff wellbeing initiatives.
 - Patient story sessions.
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Discussion Topic 2

Diagnosis Experience

What Patients Are Telling Us

Diagnosis-related experiences are frequently associated with:

- Anxiety.
- Uncertainty.

- Conflicting information.
- Difficulty understanding next steps.

Many patients describe uncertainty as being more distressing than the diagnosis itself.

Discussion Questions

1. Where are communication challenges occurring?
2. How consistent are messages across services?
3. Do patients understand what happens next?
4. How effectively do we provide written information?

Potential Improvement Opportunities

- Standardised communication approaches.
 - Written summaries after appointments.
 - Follow-up support calls.
 - Improved safety-netting information.
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Discussion Topic 3

Treatment Delivery and Side Effects

What Patients Are Telling Us

Patients frequently discuss:

- Pain management.
- Treatment side-effects.
- Difficulties obtaining support.
- Delays accessing advice.
- Coordination between hospital and primary care.

Many comments suggest that patients are uncertain who to contact when problems occur.

Discussion Questions

1. How easy is it for patients to access advice?
2. Are support pathways clearly understood?
3. Are symptom management services responsive?
4. How effectively do services work together?

Potential Improvement Opportunities

- Enhanced toxicity support.

- Clear escalation pathways.
 - Improved communication between care settings.
 - Standardised patient information.
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Discussion Topic 4

Palliative and End-of-Life Care

What Patients Are Telling Us

This was the most negatively positioned theme.

Key issues include:

- Pain management.
- Delays in support.
- Communication with families.
- Dignity and respect.
- Coordination of care.

Many comments relate to highly significant moments in patients' and families' lives.

Discussion Questions

1. What are our biggest challenges in palliative care?
2. Are families adequately supported?
3. How quickly can patients access symptom control?
4. Are escalation pathways working effectively?

Potential Improvement Opportunities

- Rapid symptom control pathways.
 - Family communication standards.
 - Improved access to specialist palliative care.
 - Earlier intervention.
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Discussion Topic 5

Mental Health and Emotional Support

What Patients Are Telling Us

Patients frequently describe:

- Anxiety.

- Fear of recurrence.
- Depression.
- Isolation.
- Emotional impact on families and carers.

Many patients report that emotional support is not always offered proactively.

Discussion Questions

1. How consistently do we identify emotional needs?
2. Are referral pathways well understood?
3. What support is available for carers?
4. How effectively do we signpost support services?

Potential Improvement Opportunities

- Routine screening.
 - Earlier intervention.
 - Better awareness of available services.
 - Peer support programmes.
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Discussion Topic 6

Timeliness and Responsiveness

What Patients Are Telling Us

Patients frequently mention:

- Delays.
- Unanswered calls.
- Waiting for results.
- Difficulties obtaining updates.

Patients often describe uncertainty as creating additional anxiety.

Discussion Questions

1. What causes delays locally?
2. Are communication standards clear?
3. How quickly do patients receive updates?
4. How effectively are enquiries managed?

Potential Improvement Opportunities

- Callback standards.
 - Improved tracking of patient enquiries.
 - Escalation routes for unresolved issues.
 - Better communication systems.
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Areas of Strength to Protect

The analysis suggests that organisations should continue to protect and strengthen:

- Compassion and kindness.
- Staff attitudes and behaviours.
- Practical support and navigation services.
- Family involvement.
- Equity and cultural sensitivity.
- Environmental and comfort factors.

These themes appear consistently associated with positive patient experiences.