

P-05-936 Offer Bowel Cancer Screening After the Age of 74, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 26.01.20

The reason I lodged the petition was solely because of the perceived view that those over the age of 74 could be seen as disadvantaged, compared to those in England and Scotland. It was getting my first kit to do my own sample, that pre-empted me to pursue this as a petition on the Senedd website. My dad died of bowel cancer in 1995 on his 63rd birthday, just 7 weeks after diagnosis. He failed to act on symptoms. His own fault. I have had 3 colonoscopies myself, since he died and on one occasion, polyps were removed. So I am very aware of the cancer. I had prostate cancer in 2018 and the cancer is gone, though I am still on hormone treatment and tablets because of the after effects of the radiotherapy. If a male screening programme for prostate cancer can be created in the next few years, I would be pleased, as the PSA test is not 100% accurate.

Going back to my petition, I must thank the Minister for his explanation and the fact that it mentions that the aim is to reduce the age to 50 on bowel cancer screening by 2023. But why the delay? People will die as a result of any delay. I welcome the proposal to reduce it from 60 to 50, but ask the Petitions Committee to ask the Minister to bring the date forward.

The letter advises that the UKNSC does not recommend bowel cancer screening beyond 74. Can I please ask why as no explanation is given. You can still get bowel cancer as 76.

The Minister also writes "...all screening programmes have the potential to do harm". I would equally contend that you could say the opposite and be equally valid. All screening programmes also could have the potential to do good". There, I said it. So why does the Minister make his comment and make me believe that he is 100% correct with his assertion.

As the UKNSC does not recommend screening beyond 74, are England and Scotland looking at reversing their policy to fall in line with Wales? And other nations in the world. If not, maybe they see there IS a benefit with their policy.

Nothing is mentioned in the Minister's letter with regards to potential costs of falling into line with England and Scotland. It must be possible to get the information and work out a projected cost for Wales. My petition is not proposing anything radical as I am aware that every decision has a cost implication. The Minister has given NO mention of costs.

My final question is that if the Older People's Commissioner for Wales was to say that the current policy discriminates against those aged over 74, will the Petitions Committee ask the Minister to rethink. I presume the Commissioner has been consulted and provided her comments as part of your committee meeting on 4th February, when you discuss my petition.

I look forward to (hopefully) watching the debate on my PC, and thank you for time in keeping me informed