

From the Office of the President
Dr Katharine Halliday MB ChB FRCS FRCR



The Royal College of Radiologists

Rt Hon Rachel Reeves
Chancellor of the Exchequer
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

21st October 2024

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing to you as President of The Royal College of Radiologists, on behalf of our members – clinical radiologists and clinical oncologists, doctors who are experts in diagnostic imaging and sit at the heart of cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Lord Darzi's recent NHS review rightly highlighted chronic underinvestment in diagnostics as a major factor behind long waiting times, as well as the troubling state of cancer care. We ask you to use the opportunity of the forthcoming budget to move the dial for patients, through targeted investment that would reduce stubbornly long waits and create an NHS fit for the future, by:

- 1. Supporting NHS England to complete the rollout of iRefer Clinical Decision Support (CDS) to all trusts** and fund the expansion of iRefer to A&E and diagnostic departments to drive productivity. iRefer benefits clinicians and patients by supporting rapid diagnosis, ensuring that the most appropriate imaging test is requested and conducted at the right time. At a time of high clinical and financial pressure, expanding iRefer would help promote effective use of scarce resources.
- 2. Allocating £158 million to finalise the Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) Programme.** CDCs play a central role in achieving the NHS's goal of reducing waiting lists and expanding diagnostic capacity. Further funding is needed to roll CDC coverage out across the whole country, especially in areas with high levels of deprivation. With demand for healthcare set to increase, the CDC programme represents a key part of the government's aim to shift care from acute settings and into the community.
- 3. Supporting capital investment in cancer, including £110.8 million to replace the 64 linear accelerator (linac) machines in NHS England that are over 10 years of age.** Replacing old lincas with modern equivalents would boost NHS productivity by enabling fast and more effective radiotherapy treatment. Data published last week shows that only 39% of radiotherapy patients are currently receiving their first treatment within 62 days of a cancer referral. Urgent action is needed to correct this.

Finally, it is critical that the Government continues to support the NHS workforce, who must be at the heart of efforts to improve the NHS. In the face of major shortfalls – 30% for clinical radiologists and 15% for clinical oncologists – it is vital that we invest in recruiting, training and retaining staff. We look forward to working with this Government on our shared mission for patients and staff.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Katharine Halliday
President
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