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NHS England sets out ambitious action to improve survival and quality of life for people with cancer in Cumbria and the North East

Posted on Tuesday 6th December 2016

NHS England's chief executive, Simon Stevens, has today announced that The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust will benefit from a major national investment in LINAC radiotherapy machines.

Following the recently announced investment of £130m to kickstart the upgrade of radiotherapy equipment and to transform cancer treatment across England, work has been under way to identify where there is greatest need.

The trusts are two of 15 across the UK to benefit from this investment alongside £200m of additional funding, over two years, to improve local cancer services.

Speaking at the Britain Against Cancer conference in London today, Mr Stevens has said that survival rates are now at their highest ever.

Mr Stevens has said NHS England is ramping up efforts on early diagnosis and to help people live well with and beyond cancer.

Latest data shows that national one year survival rates for all cancers continue to rise, as do rates for breast, colorectal (colon) and lung cancer individually.

The £200m fund has been set up to encourage local areas to find new and innovative ways to diagnose cancer earlier, improve the care for those living with cancer and ensure each cancer patient gets the right care for them.

The Cancer Alliance in the north east and Cumbria, which brings clinical and local health leaders together to transform cancer pathways and improve cancer services locally, is being asked to bid for a share of the £200m fund to use to invest in three priority areas:

Early diagnosis

- Early diagnosis can save lives, so extra funding will be given to local NHS doctors and managers who have the best ideas about helping people to get their diagnosis quicker and stop them bouncing between GPs and hospitals. This could mean supporting specific tools for GPs to use to help them recognise cancer, like the Macmillan decision support tool; setting up diagnosis services to be able to test and rule out a number of different things quickly; and improving local communications systems to ensure information is passed securely and quickly between hospitals and GP surgeries.

Care during and after cancer treatment – "Recovery Package"

- The aim of the Recovery Package is to help ensure patients have more personal care and support from the point they are diagnosed. For a patient this means working with their clinician to develop a comprehensive plan outlining not only their physical needs, but also other support they may need, such as help at home or financial advice.

Care after cancer treatment

- Once treatment is finished, it is vital that people continue to have the right care and support. This will be different for everyone and it is important to work with people to develop an appropriate plan to suit them, instead of a one size fits all approach where people are booked in for appointments at set time scales. Some areas are doing this very



successfully, but for others the additional funding could be used to personalise follow up to individual needs and preferences – for some, more intensive clinical support is needed, but others may feel confident to take control and manage their own care, seeking support when needed.

Dr Jonathan Slade, medical director for NHS England Cumbria and the North East, said: "This announcement on new radiotherapy machines is fantastic news. We know the devastating effect that cancer can have on patients and their families. Knowing those affected will receive the most modern treatment that will give them the best chance of survival, whilst also reducing side effects, is invaluable."

Stephen Eames, chief executive at North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "We are delighted that we are one of the Trusts that has been selected to receive a new LINAC radiotherapy machine.

"We have been working collaboratively for some time with our colleagues at Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust as part of a Cancer Alliance in order to ensure that radiotherapy, chemotherapy and oncology services can be delivered locally. Today's news is the first step to achieving long term sustainability for the service and we will be continuing to work with our colleagues in Newcastle to further develop our plans to provide safe and high quality oncology services in West, North and East Cumbria."

Sir Leonard Fenwick, Chief Executive of The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said: "In working to secure the capital replacement programme for LINACs, we are truly delighted at the announcement that we were awarded funding as part of the national £130million investment. Our cancer care experts at the Northern Centre for Cancer Care are now seeking to implement the new equipment from March 2017."

Of the partnership with Cumbria, Sir Leonard Fenwick said: "We are working in a most effective partnership to ensure patients in Cumbria have access to modern technology and this is a great news story."

Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive of NHS England, said: "Across the country, the NHS is now making great strides in upgrading modern cancer radiotherapy equipment and ensuring faster access to the most promising new cancer drugs. Because the quality of NHS cancer care has improved so much over the past year, an extra two thousand families will be able to celebrate the Christmas holiday with a loved one who has successfully survived cancer. It's an enormous tribute to dedicated nurses, doctors, scientists and patients organisations that we are on track to save 30,000 more lives a year from cancer."

These announcements follow the recent publication of a national scheme which offers hospitals financial incentives to take action on prevention and to improve the quality of life for people with cancer.

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