

## Wales

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Vaughan Gething AM  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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Monday 3 December 2018

Dear Mr Gething

Breast cancer patients represent the largest cancer patient group in the UK, with approximately 691,000 people, predicted to rise to 840,000 in 2020. In Wales, there are 38,000 people currently living with breast cancer.

There is currently no estimate of the number of people living with secondary breast cancer in Wales. Across the UK as a whole, there are an estimated 35,000 people living with the disease. Secondary breast cancer is treatable but not curable, and it is estimated that one third of primary breast cancer patients will go on to develop secondary breast cancer within fifteen years. Over 11,500 people lose their lives to breast cancer every year and recent analysis suggest that this figure could rise within the next four years.

As you know, we are currently campaigning for the introduction of a Secondary Support Package for people living with secondary breast cancer. We welcome the recent announcement to establish a Task & Finish Group to discuss the issue of specialist nursing for secondary breast cancer across Wales. From listening to what patients are telling us, and our research into current nursing provision for secondary breast cancer patients, we know that this is a vital step to ensure people living with this disease access the support they need. We are looking forward to fully engaging and contributing to this group.

The Cancer Patient Experience Survey results in Wales demonstrate that having a named Clinical Nurse Specialist is an important factor to ensure patients have a positive experience of care. However, our research shows that, currently, many people are not receiving the support they need to manage the complex physical and emotional impacts of the disease.

As part of our campaign, 'Secondary. Not Second Rate: Incurable shouldn't mean unsupported', we asked Health Boards and Trusts in Wales about the services they provide to people living with this disease. Our research shows that:

- 80% of Health Boards and Trusts that provide services for people with secondary breast cancer do not offer secondary breast cancer patients access to a dedicated nurse specialist with specific skills and expertise. Across Wales, only Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board offers patients access to a dedicated secondary breast cancer clinical nurse specialist.
- Over two fifths (42%) of relevant Health Boards and Trusts do not assess people's emotional and physical needs when they are diagnosed and as their treatment changes
- Over two fifths (42%) of Health Boards and Trusts are not able to tell us how many people with secondary breast cancer they are currently supporting

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- Almost half (45%) of Health Boards and Trusts do not offer people access to a tailored health and wellbeing event

We believe that everyone living with secondary breast cancer must be able to access the support they need to live well, regardless of where they live. However, there is no specific commitment to provide a comprehensive package of support tailored for people living with incurable cancers in the Cancer Delivery Plan for Wales. This is despite the fact that we know people living with a diagnosis of secondary breast cancer often have complex emotional and physical needs.

We welcomed Welsh Government's recent commitment to increase NHS funding in 2019-20 by £220million. We urge Welsh Government to ensure that part of this funding is used to improve services for people with secondary breast cancer, specifically by introducing a Secondary Support Package that can be accessed when diagnosed, through treatment and during end-of-life care.

The Support Package would include a full assessment of emotional and physical needs, access to a specialist nurse, treatment summaries, and a tailored health and wellbeing event. This would guarantee women receive vital specialised and ongoing support.

We have set out the measures of support required for people with secondary breast cancer with this letter, along with a list of cross-party AMs and MPs that support our campaign.

Yours sincerely,



Mags Holloway

Head of Wales, Breast Cancer Care