



Thames Valley  
Cancer Alliance



## Communications Toolkit: Modernising Cancer Waiting Times Standards

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# 1 The Position

Following the National changes to Cancer Waiting Times, which came into effect on 1 October 2023, you will find further information in this document to support communications about these changes to staff and patients across Thames Valley.

## 2 Key Messages

### 2.1 What will be different for NHS workforce?

Shifting to the Faster Diagnosis Standard means we are focused on the outcome of a referral, not the process. GPs will still refer people with suspected cancer in the same way, but the focus will be on getting people diagnosed or cancer ruled out within 28 days, rather than simply getting a first appointment. The changes will also give clinicians greater flexibility to adopt new technologies such as remote image review and AI, and modern working practices such as One-Stop-Shops and Straight-to-Test.

### 2.2 What will be different for patients?

These changes will still set the same high-performance bar for the same groups of patients that were covered by the previous standards and will increase the number and proportion of patients covered by the standards. They are designed to focus on two clear goals:

- achieving the fastest possible diagnosis
- for those who are diagnosed and require treatment, ensuring they receive treatment as quickly as possible.

The new standards will also give all patients the same opportunity for diagnosis, whatever the origin of their referral.



## 3 Communications to Workforce

### 3.1 Summary of the Cancer Waiting Time Standards (1-page)

A [single-page summary of the revised CWTs](#) is available on the TVCA website.

### 3.2 Bulletin/Newsletter Copy

Please use the following message in communications to workforce colleagues:

From 1 October 2023, cancer waiting time standards are being modernised and simplified, moving to three measures:

- 28-day Faster Diagnosis Standard – diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days of referral (target 75%)
- 31-day Treatment Standard – a first treatment within a month of decision to treat for all cancer patients (target 96%)
- 62-day Treatment Standard – a first treatment within two months of referral or consultant upgrade (target 85%)

Faster Diagnosis is in place already and remains unchanged. Changes taking place are:

- Removal of 2-week-wait standard, although many Providers plan to continue to work within this parameter operationally
- Combining existing 31-day first and subsequent treatment standards into one
- Combining 62-day standard to include patients from screening and consultant upgrade as well as those referred by GP

There will be no change to how GPs refer patients onto a suspected cancer pathway. All changes will be made in the reporting of the standard. The changes will allow more focus on outcomes not processes and encourage modern cancer diagnostic practices like one-stop-shops, remote image review, and straight-to-test.

The Faster Diagnosis Standard target will increase gradually to 80% by 2026.

More information is available here: [NHS England » Cancer](#)



### 3.3 Referral Systems in Primary Care

Please continue to use existing referral forms for primary care – these are currently being updated and will be shared when available. Please continue to use the existing 2WW forms and referral process until this update takes place.

All patient-facing information needs to be amended to say 'Urgent Suspected Cancer Referrals'.

A summary of information for patients about the new Urgent Referrals standard is available on the TVCA website:

- [Information for Patients: Urgent Suspected Cancer Referrals PDF](#) on TVCA website

This is currently available in English but will soon be available in other languages.

## 4 Communications to Patients

### 4.1 FAQs for Primary Care

Many GPs have reported enquiries from patients about these planned changes. The national cancer communications team have provided the following FAQs. Please [contact TVCA](#) if you have received any additional comments/questions that we can ask to be added to this – please mark the Subject: box ‘CWT FAQs’.

- [Link to National FAQs on TVCA web resources](#)
- [Information for Patients: Urgent Suspected Cancer Referrals PDF](#) on TVCA website

### 4.2 Social Media Messaging for Patients and Communities

The following graphics and communications have been prepared by the National Cancer Communications team. Please consider using these on your social media channels to assist patients with the change in cancer waiting time standards. Please refer to the FAQs above, for any responses you may need to use if comments are posted. The graphics can also be printed if you wish to display this information in your waiting areas.





## Suggested copy for social media

Channel	Copy
Facebook	<p>From 1 October, NHS cancer waiting time standards are being simplified to help speed up cancer diagnosis and treatment for thousands of people. The new standards include three measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Faster Diagnosis Standard, which means a diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days of referral.</li> <li>• 31-day treatment standard, which means all cancer patients will start treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat.</li> <li>• 62-day treatment standard, which means patients will start treatment within 62 days of referral or consultant upgrade.</li> </ul> <p>Read more about how the NHS is changing cancer waiting times standards: <a href="#">NHS England » Cancer</a></p>
LinkedIn	<p>From 1 October, the standards measuring waiting times for cancer diagnosis and treatment are being simplified to help speed up cancer diagnosis and treatment for thousands of people.</p> <p>The NHS has until now had ten performance standards for cancer but following consultation and with the support of cancer charities and clinicians, these targets will be combined into three key standards. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Faster Diagnosis Standard, which means a diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days of referral</li> <li>• 31-day treatment standard, which means all cancer patients will start treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat</li> <li>• 62-day treatment standard, which means patients will start treatment within 62 days of referral or consultant upgrade</li> </ul> <p>Read more about how the NHS is changing cancer waiting times standards. <a href="#">NHS England » Cancer</a></p>
Instagram	<p>From 1 October, NHS cancer waiting time standards are being simplified to help speed up cancer diagnosis and treatment for thousands of people. The new standards include three measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Faster Diagnosis Standard, which means a diagnosis or ruling out of cancer within 28 days of referral.</li> <li>• 31-day treatment standard, which means all cancer patients will start treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat.</li> <li>• 62-day treatment standard, which means patients will start treatment within 62 days of referral or consultant upgrade.</li> </ul> <p>Click the link in our bio for more information on how the NHS is changing cancer waiting times.</p>
Twitter/X	<p>From 1 October, the standards measuring cancer waiting times are being changed.</p> <p>The new changes will ensure people are diagnosed and able to start treatment as quickly as possible For more info: <a href="#">NHS England » Cancer</a></p>

## 5 Further Information

- full guidance on the [Cancer Waiting Times Standards from NHS England](#)
- please [email TVCA](#) with comments or queries and include 'CWT information' in the Subject: box