

NCCP Early Diagnosis of Symptomatic Cancer Plan 2022-2025

Implementation Report – April 2023/April 2024

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Target Action	2023/24 Target Output	Delivered
Objective I: Strategic planning and collaboration		
Action Ia: Constitute an Internal NCCP Early Diagnosis of Cancer Working Group to facilitate collaborative working within NCCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to meet quarterly, at a minimum, and coordinate/ collaborate on early diagnosis initiatives. Minutes of meetings will describe work of Working Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCCP Early Diagnosis Working Group met on 9 occasions in 2023-24; multiple projects discussed/ progressed.
Action Ib: Develop a prioritisation framework to guide the prioritisation of cancers for the design and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework developed 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lung cancer determined as initial priority, with additional tumour specific ad-hoc projects as required.

implementation of early diagnosis programmes of work		
Action 1c: Convene an Early Diagnosis of Symptomatic Cancer Steering Group to collaborate in delivery of NCCP Early Diagnosis of Symptomatic Cancer Plan 2022-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to meet bi-annually at a minimum. • Membership of group to update on projects relevant to early diagnosis, identify opportunities for collaboration/ coordination, and share learning. • Minutes of meetings will describe work of Steering Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Group met on 3 occasions in 2023/24: 20th April 2023 (virtual), 15th June 2023 (in-person), 19th Oct 2023 (virtual). • Meetings included NCCP updates and updates from other stakeholders. NCRI delivered updates on key findings of newly published epidemiological reports. Multiple projects discussed/ advanced & opportunities for collaboration identified.
Building the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build early detection network, nationally and internationally. 	<p>The staff of the NCCP Early Diagnosis Function continue to build their professional network through participation in regular meetings with key stakeholder organisations, participation in relevant advisory and working groups, and attendance at relevant conferences nationally and internationally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCCP Public Health, including Early Diagnosis Function, regularly engages with key stakeholders including HSE Health & Wellbeing, the National Cancer Registry Ireland, and the National Screening Service. • NCCP Early Diagnosis Function is represented on multiple relevant groups including Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategic Advisory Group. • Attended Cancer Research UK (CRUK) Early Detection of Cancer Conference, London, October 2023. • Supported delivery of inaugural RCSI Primary Care Research into Cancer (PRiCAN) Symposium, Dublin, March 2024. The symposium focused on advancing early detection of cancer in primary care. Dr Heather Burns delivered a presentation on the role of evidence in policy-making.
Objective II: Empower people and communities to recognise and act on signs/symptoms of cancer		
Action 1a: Identify national and target population barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake further analyses of data collected via the National Survey of Cancer Awareness & Attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Survey on Cancer Awareness and Attitudes: Data from National Survey analysed, including project undertaken by Dr Celia O’Hare, Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine, analysing sociodemographic disparities

<p>to recognising and acting on signs/symptoms of cancer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan/commence equivalent research with underserved population 	<p>in beliefs about cancer in people aged 50 and older. Findings disseminated to multiple stakeholders, including membership of NCCP Early Diagnosis of Cancer Steering Group. Article will be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cancer Awareness and Beliefs amongst Irish Travellers: Survey on awareness and beliefs around cancer among Irish Travellers commenced in collaboration with UCD research team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field work completed in 2024 Final report to be completed Q2 2024 Survey data analysed to provide further information on cervical screening uptake, and awareness of smoking as a cancer risk factor, among Irish Travellers. Presentation on <i>“Uptake of cervical screening and acceptability of HPV self-sampling in Irish Traveller women”</i> delivered by UCD research team at British Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology (BSCCP) Conference, Edinburgh, April 2024. Abstract entitled <i>“Smoking and awareness of smoking as a risk factor for cancer in the Traveller Community in Ireland”</i> submitted to Faculty of Public Health Medicine Summer Scientific Meeting 2024. Work underway to publish findings in peer-reviewed journals.
<p>Action IIb: Work with stakeholders to design and deliver interventions to address barriers to recognising and acting on signs/symptoms of cancer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with stakeholders to design and deliver early diagnosis initiatives, including awareness campaigns 	<p>Multiple awareness-raising initiatives were undertaken by NCCP in 2023-24. Examples include:</p> <p><u>Awareness-raising (national):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media cancer risk reduction and early detection public awareness campaign delivered in collaboration with HSE Communications. The 2023 social media campaign commenced in February 2023, and ran until December 2023, with new content released on a monthly basis. The campaign was delivered via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The early detection elements of the campaign aimed to raise awareness of cancer signs/symptoms and prompt timely help-seeking. The primary target audience for the early detection content was people aged 50 and older, as most cancer cases (86%) occur in this age demographic. The campaign included messaging relevant to multiple tumour types, with new

		<p>content released on a monthly basis.</p> <p>An analysis undertaken by HSE Communications demonstrated that campaign performance was strong, with 1.17million people reached by the early detection campaign, including 90% of the target audience (i.e. the campaign reached 90% of people aged 50 and older who use Facebook).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gynaecological cancer public awareness: Collaborated with <i>thisisGO</i> to support delivery of public awareness campaigns on World Ovarian Cancer Day, May 2023 and Gynaecological Cancer Month, Sept 2023. • ALONE: Collaborated with ALONE to develop and provide education and awareness training on early diagnosis of cancer to their staff and volunteers. Three components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training of ALONE staff - live webinar, recorded for future use by ALONE - Development of online training module for ALONE volunteers - Communication and sensitivity training for ALONE staff and volunteers provided via live session and recorded session for ongoing use provided by Margaret Bowen, accredited Psychotherapist, Msc, Bsc, MIACP. • ESB: Series of webinars delivered to ESB staff on Cancer Prevention and Early Diagnosis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Webinar 1: 19/07/23 Skin cancer prevention and early diagnosis: 166 attendees. Feedback from attendees: How would you rate the webinar overall: 4.72/5 - Webinar 2: Cancer risk reduction Nov 2023 - Webinar 3: Breast and Prostate Cancer 27th September 2023 - Webinar 4: March 2024 Bowel and Lung Cancer • World Cancer Day 2024: Public webinar delivered for World Cancer Day Feb 2024, Topics: Lung cancer and colorectal cancer prevention and early diagnosis, and bowel cancer screening. • Public-facing resources, including 'know the signs of cancer' posters and factsheets developed and made available on the NCCP website at www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection and via www.healthpromotion.ie • Lung Cancer awareness camping planning: Planning commenced for lung cancer public awareness campaign, aiming to deliver campaign in Q3 2024.
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		<p>Awareness-raising (regional/local)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Promotion & Improvement Officers - Cancer: Through the National Service Planning Process, NCCP secured funding for a network of 6 Health Promotion and Improvement Officers – Cancer, within the Health & Wellbeing Division of the HSE. The first HPIO – Cancer post was filled in 2022, and four additional HPIOs took up post in 2023. NCCP supports and coordinates this network, working closely with the HPIOs to develop and agree work plans, develop population profiles, and support delivery of cancer risk reduction and early diagnosis/ awareness-raising initiatives to target cohorts in the community.
<p>Action IIc: Develop and maintain a dedicated ‘early diagnosis of cancer’ webpage on the NCCP website, offering evidence-based information and resources for the public/patients</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to maintain NCCP early diagnosis of cancer webpage • Develop Early Diagnosis resources (posters, factsheets etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public-facing resources added to NCCP Early Diagnosis of Cancer webpage including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poster - ‘Melanoma - know the signs’, June 2023 – Patient information booklet - ‘Prostate Cancer: Having your prostate checked’ <p><i>Resources available to download from NCCP website</i> www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection, hard copies available to order from www.healthpromotion.ie</p>
<p>Objective III: Support community healthcare professionals (HCPs) to recognise and refer people with signs/symptoms of cancer</p>		
<p>Action IIIa: Identify community HCP barriers to recognising and referring people with signs/symptoms of cancer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HCP representatives to determine educational requirements and opportunities to address this, e.g. via contributing to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with HCP groups to identify educational opportunities
<p>Action IIIb: Work with stakeholders to design and deliver</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community HCP stakeholders to develop and deliver interventions, including educational 	<p>Multiple interventions were developed and delivered to community HCPs in 2023/24. Examples include: GPs:</p>

<p>interventions to address HCP barriers to recognising and referring people with signs/symptoms of cancer</p>	<p>interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP Trainees: Educational module on managing patients presenting to primary care with Non-Specific Symptoms of Cancer (NSSC) developed in collaboration with ICGP. This module was made available to all GP Trainees nationally via ICGP educational website in September 2023. • GP Continuing Medical Education (CME): Collaborated with ICGP on development of content for ICGP small-group CME meeting on the topic of NSSC. Made available to all ICGP CME groups nationwide in Jan 2024. • ICGP Trainers: Presentation to ICGP GP Trainers from Midlands GP Training scheme on topic of NSSC (n=13 attendees), Feb 7th 2023. • ICGP CME Tutors network: Presentation to ICGP CME tutors workshop on topic of NSSC in January 2024 (35 out of a total of 40 tutors attended). • ICGP Trainers: Webinar on topic of NSSC delivered to Trinity College network of GP Trainers (approximately 40 trainers attended), February 2024. • ICGP Annual Conference: Presentation on topic of NSSC delivered to GP attendees, May 2023. • Dermatological Cancer: ICGP Community Dermatology educational course for GPs, funded by NCCP, provided three modules to GPs in 2023 on melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC). In 2023, each module was completed by 120-130 GPs. • Gynaecological Cancer: Education session delivered in collaboration with ICGP as part of ICGP Community Gynaecology course, March 2023. Attended by 113 GPs. Course material was re-recorded, updated and made available for March 2024. • Article: Article on the topic of NSSC published in FORUM Magazine, Sept 2023. <p>General Practice Nurses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IGPNEA Website: Further material provided to IGPNEA cancer section on website. • Educational Webinars: Title: 'Cancer Referrals and Pathways' presented on three occasions to Practice Nurses in 2023. • IGPNEA Annual Conference: Presentation on cancer early diagnosis and referral pathways delivered to General Practice Nurses in-person at
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		<p>IGPNEA Conference, May 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IGPNEA webinar: Annual educational webinar to General Practice Nurses on Cancer Referrals and Pathways, February 2024. • Community Nurses: Presentation on lung cancer to approximately 40 community nurses, including practice nurses and public health nurses, January 2024. • Community Nurses: In collaboration with Practice Nurse Development Co-ordinators, webinar on Early Diagnosis of Cancer delivered to approximately 40 Practice nurses and community nurses February 16th 2024. <p>Pharmacists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacy: Two lectures delivered to RCSI Pharmacy students, March 2024. Topics: Cancer Prevention and Cancer Early Detection. • Pharmacy: Irish Institute of Pharmacy (IIOP) webinar on topic of NSSC delivered December 2023. Attendance: 101 pharmacists. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oncology Nurse Education Programme, Tallaght <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Detection of Cancer, April 2023 - Cancer Epidemiology, National Cancer Screening Programmes in Ireland, September 2023
<p>Action: IIIc: Develop and maintain a dedicated ‘early diagnosis of cancer’ webpage on the NCCP website, offering evidence-based information and resources for HCPs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Action IIc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webpage maintained, includes information/resources of relevance both to the general public and to HSCPs www.hse.ie/cancerearlydetection

Objective IV: Identify and address system factors that impact timeliness of diagnosis of symptomatic cancer

<p>Action IVa: Identify health system factors that impact timeliness of diagnosis of symptomatic cancer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders, including clinicians, to identify health system barriers to early diagnosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCCP routinely works with stakeholders to identify system factors that influence timeliness of diagnosis, through forums including the NCCP Early Diagnosis of Symptomatic Cancer Steering Group and Clinical Leads Groups for specific tumour types.
<p>Action IVb: Work with stakeholders to design and deliver interventions to address health system factors that impact timeliness of diagnosis of symptomatic cancer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with internal and external stakeholders to address system issues impacting timelines of cancer diagnosis, including referral guidelines and pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral guideline/pathway development/updates: Staff of the Early Diagnosis Function are represented on NCCP Guideline Development Groups. Guidelines currently under development include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Breast Cancer Family History GP Referral Guideline and e-referral form (work ongoing) – Lung cancer GP referral guideline and e-referral form (work ongoing) • Needs Assessment on requirements for achieving timely diagnosis in people presenting with NSSC commenced in 2023 (work ongoing). • Cervical Cancer Elimination: NCCP is represented on the Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategic Advisory Group and Working Group. Ireland has set a target to achieve cervical cancer elimination by 2040. NCCP has a role in defining, and supporting delivery of, actions under the ‘treatment’ pillar of the Cervical Cancer Elimination Action Plan (under development). Eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem includes actions to ensure these cancers are diagnosed in a timely manner and treated appropriately.
<p>Action IVc: Identify systemic inequities impacting timeliness of diagnosis of symptomatic cancer for defined patient cohorts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross cutting action • See Action IIa - Cancer awareness and attitudes research with Irish Travellers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross cutting action. • See Action IIa - Cancer awareness and attitudes research with Irish Travellers.

and design/contribute to/advocate for interventions towards ensuring equitable service provision		
Objective V: Identify knowledge gaps and undertake research to inform development of early diagnosis initiatives		
Action Va: Identify knowledge gaps relevant to the early diagnosis of cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to identify knowledge gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCCP works with multiple stakeholders, including clinicians and academics, to identify knowledge gaps. The Early Diagnosis Function is currently represented on the NCCP National Cancer Research Group and on the Primary Care Research into Cancer (PRiCAN) research group, RCSI. NCCP is inputting to a PRiCAN project aimed at defining research priorities in the area of primary care and early detection of cancer.
Action Vb: Undertake, commission and support research to address knowledge gaps and inform development and implementation of early diagnosis initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake, commission and support research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See research actions and deliverables reported under Actions IIa and IIIa. • NCCP is commissioning a systematic review of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of interventions to promote cancer awareness and early presentation. Tender process completed Q1 2023. Project awarded to RCSI, expected completion date Q4 2024. • In 2023-24, NCCP supported/ collaborated with academic colleagues in submitting grant applications for research relevant to the work of the Early Diagnosis Function.
Objective VI: Monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of the NCCP Early Diagnosis of Symptomatic Cancer Plan 2022-2025		
Action VIa: Develop a monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action complete. Monitoring and evaluation framework will report on delivery of projects under each action area of the Early Diagnosis Plan 	

framework for the NCCP Early Diagnosis of Symptomatic Cancer Plan 2022-2025		
Action VIb: Publish an annual report to update on the implementation and impact of the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish annual implementation report for 2023-24 	
Action VIc: Incorporate recommendations from annual report into work plan for following year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider 2023-24 implementation report; develop recommendations; Incorporate recommendations into work plan for 2024/25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See recommendations below

Recommendations arising from Implementation Report 2023-24

- **Objective I: Strategic Planning & Collaboration**
 - Large volume of activity delivered under Early Diagnosis Plan in 2023-24 – ongoing need to strategically define annual priority projects & build capacity for delivery of NCCP Early Diagnosis Function.
 - Continue to Chair NCCP Early Diagnosis Working Group and Steering Group.
 - Continue to build ‘early detection’ network, both nationally and internationally, attend relevant conferences etc.
 - Identify further opportunities for collaborative working with stakeholders including those working in diagnostics (radiology, endoscopy) and academia.
 - Lifetime of current Early Diagnosis Plan is to April 2025 – commence strategic planning for future of the Function, in the context of national cancer policy/ strategy.
- **Objective II: Empower People & Communities**
 - Deliver ‘cancer awareness and attitudes among Irish Travellers’ research project.
 - Continue to coordinate and support HPIO network in delivery of risk reduction and early detection initiatives to high risk cohorts in the

community; build capacity within NCCP to support/coordinate the HPIO network.

- Deliver lung cancer awareness campaign 2024 and evaluation of same.
- Ensure delivery of systematic review of interventions to promote cancer awareness and early presentation by Q4 2024. This research will inform future approach to awareness-raising activity.
- **Objective III: Support Community HCPs**
 - Consider strategic priorities for supporting HCPs to achieve earlier diagnosis – e.g. through addressing systems issues (Objective IV), in addition to providing targeted educational interventions through CPD programmes etc.
 - Continue to identify opportunities to promote cancer awareness and early diagnosis amongst HCPs.
- **Objective IV: Identify and Address System Factors**
 - Continue membership of relevant NCCP Guideline Development Groups.
 - Input to priority projects defined in collaboration with clinical colleagues e.g. Tumour Leads Groups.
 - Continue to consider requirements for achieving timely diagnosis in people presenting with NSSC.
 - Input to National Radiology Review.
 - Continue membership of Cervical Cancer Elimination (CCE) Advisory and Working Groups – input to development of CCE Action Plan.
- **Objective V: Research**
 - Deliver research in relation to knowledge and awareness of cancer among Irish Travellers.
 - Deliver systematic review of interventions to promote cancer awareness and early presentation.
 - Continue NCCP Early Diagnosis Function representation on key groups, e.g. NCCP National Cancer Research Group, PRiCAN research group.
- **Objective VI**
 - Consider appropriate evaluation metrics for projects delivered under the Early Diagnosis Plan, and how these can be captured and reported on.