



Michelle O'Neill MLA and Emma Little-Pengelly MLA  
First Minister of Northern Ireland  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast BT4 3SQ

CC: Mike Nesbitt, Minister of Health, Northern Ireland Assembly

Dear First Minister and Deputy First Minister,

Pancreatic cancer is the deadliest common cancer. Half of people die within three months of diagnosis. Without urgent action, pancreatic cancer will claim thousands more lives in Northern Ireland and will overtake breast cancer as the fourth biggest cancer killer.

Unlike with other cancers, we still don't have the rapid tests and treatments to tackle pancreatic cancer. However, over recent years promising pancreatic cancer research and surveillance programmes have put early detection within closer reach.

We are reassured to see your Department of Health working with Pancreatic Cancer UK and NIPANC (the pancreatic cancer charity in Northern Ireland) to deliver an optimal care pathway in Northern Ireland for people with pancreatic cancer.

However, a shocking 80% of pancreatic cancer patients in Northern Ireland are still receiving their diagnosis too late to benefit from this optimal care pathway and potentially lifesaving treatment. We urgently need earlier detection to give more people a chance against this devastating disease.

**Now we, the [NUMBER] signatories of this open letter, need your help to make early diagnosis of pancreatic cancer a reality in Northern Ireland.**

We stand with Pancreatic Cancer UK to call on you to commit to these three actions as priorities within your aims of improving early detection:

1. **Invest in and roll-out regular monitoring for those at the highest risk of developing pancreatic cancer:** This should include national surveillance for people with a family history of pancreatic cancer and case finding in people with new-onset diabetes and weight loss.
2. **Invest in rolling out new tests to detect pancreatic cancer earlier:** Supporting the development and implementation of innovative blood, urine and breath biomarker tests to improve early detection within the existing cancer services.
3. **Urge the UK Government to transform investment into vital pancreatic cancer research by allocating at least £35 million every year across the UK for the next 20 years:** This sustained funding is essential because meaningful research breakthroughs

Pancreatic Cancer UK, Queen Elizabeth House, 4 St Dunstan's Hill, London EC3R 8AD  
020 3535 7090 | [supportercare@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@pancreaticcancer.org.uk) | [pancreaticcancer.org.uk](http://pancreaticcancer.org.uk)



require continuous, reliable investment over many years to support the full cycle of research: from bench to bedside.

The devastating impact of pancreatic cancer demands action now. We request a swift response and urge you to arrange a meeting with Pancreatic Cancer UK who will be happy to share their evidence, expertise and recommendations to support the Department to make early detection of pancreatic cancer in Northern Ireland a reality.

Please contact [Tom.Steiner@PancreaticCancer.org.uk](mailto:Tom.Steiner@PancreaticCancer.org.uk) to set up a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Signatories of our open letter]