



What it takes: Your voice

A guide to talking about blood cancer during
the 2026 Scottish parliament election



Background

On Thursday 7 May, voters in Scotland will go to the polls to elect Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). Once the election is called, the Scottish Parliament will dissolve and candidates representing different political parties will begin campaigning for election (or re-election) to one of the 129 seats available across Scotland. This election is an opportunity to put blood cancer on the political agenda in Scotland.

We've already started this by publishing a manifesto - but now we need your help.

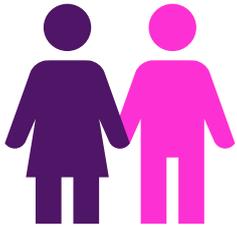
**Write to your
candidates**

**Join the
Blood Cancer UK
Policy Collective**

**Our
Manifesto**

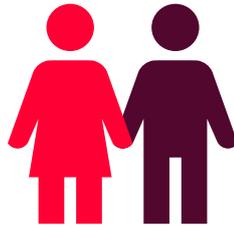


About blood cancer



2,424
people

are diagnosed every
year in Scotland

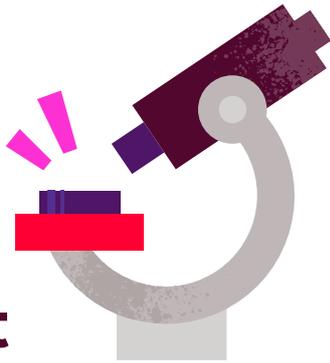


58%
of all blood
cancer deaths
are caused by
the hardest to
treat cancers

Blood cancer
is complex.

There are

100+
different
types



Around

18,000
people

are currently living
with or in remission
from blood cancer
in Scotland



The main three
types are **leukaemia**,
lymphoma and
myeloma but there are
also **myeloproliferative**
neoplasms (MPNs)
and **myelodysplastic**
syndrome (MDS)

Blood cancer
is the **fifth most**
common cancer
and the **third**
biggest cancer
killer in Scotland

Every year, blood
cancer takes
1,000+
lives in
Scotland



About Blood Cancer UK

We're a community dedicated to beating blood cancer by funding research, supporting those affected, and campaigning for change. Since 1960, we've invested over £500 million in blood cancer research, transforming treatments and saving lives.

Manifesto summary

We know what it takes to beat blood cancer in Scotland, so we're asking the next Scottish Government to:

Deliver, and fully fund, the existing 10-year Cancer Strategy for Scotland



- The current Cancer Strategy contains commitments to restore and improve cancer services in Scotland.
- Many of the 136 actions are already having a positive impact on the blood cancer community.
- However, a lack of a long-term sustainable funding is hampering the delivery of key actions.



End the current and worsening blood cancer workforce crisis

- The blood cancer workforce in Scotland is doing an exceptional job in unacceptable circumstances.
- In Scotland, 12.7% of consultant haematology posts are vacant, and 19.7% are due to retire in the next 3 years.

Ensure more people with blood cancer are diagnosed earlier through non-emergency pathways



- A timelier diagnosis of blood cancer can improve a patient's experience.
- 35% of people in Scotland with blood cancer saw their GP three times or more before being referred.
- Around 30% of new blood cancer cases are diagnosed in A&E.

Expand Scotland's genomic capabilities with the necessary funding and infrastructure

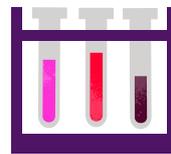


- Genomic testing is crucial for determining the kindest and most effective treatment plan for patients.
- Without long-term funding, patients could experience treatment delays or miss out on research opportunities.

Create national incentives for health boards to establish more charity partnerships



- 58% of people with blood cancer are not aware of the emotional or practical support available to them.
- Blood Cancer UK is ready to support people after diagnosis with its Referral Service, but we need NHS buy-in.



Foster an environment where both academic and commercial cancer research can flourish

- The blood cancer community is calling on health leaders to harness the benefits of cancer clinical research.
- But it's becoming more difficult to deliver research and taking too long to set up clinical trials.
- We need leadership and assurances that cancer research will be supported.

Urgently review how blood cancer is collected, categorised, analysed, and published



- To make the best clinical decision for each patient, clinicians must be able to see all the information they need.
- Blood cancer is complex and the current data infrastructure in Scotland doesn't accommodate its complexity.

How can you help?

We need election candidates to hear our manifesto asks directly from their voters - including you.

This guide has been designed to help you talk about blood cancer with your local candidates during the election. Here you'll find a variety of resources including template emails to send to candidates, how to find your candidates and a bank of questions to ask candidates if they come to your door.



How to speak to your local candidates about blood cancer

We know that interacting with political candidates may feel daunting, but no matter how much or little you can do, any engagement is still worthwhile. Here are some top tips for contacting candidates in the run up to the election

1 Find out who your candidates are

Use our e-action tool to find and write to your local candidates, the tool includes a template introductory email we've prepared for you that can be updated to include your own personal story. You can also find your local candidates on political party websites, social media or on leaflets that come through your door.

2 Share your story and keep it local

Many candidates will never have met anyone with blood cancer or understand its impact. This election is a chance to introduce them to blood cancer. Sharing your story can be a powerful way of engaging with candidates – particularly if you've faced challenges with your diagnosis, treatment or care within the constituency they want to represent. In our template email, there's space for you to share your story. It is entirely up to you if you choose to do this.

3 Meeting your candidates

If you feel comfortable talking to your candidates face-to-face, you can ask them to meet you. Candidates and their campaigners might knock on your door to ask you if you'll be voting in the election and what issues matter to you. This is a chance to share your concerns, including about how their party will address the challenges of blood cancer in Scotland if they form the next Scottish Government.

We've prepared some questions for you, as we know it can be hard to think of questions on the spot. You can also meet candidates by requesting a meeting or they may hold public meetings (hustings) where members from different political parties respond to questions from local residents.

4 Keep us updated!

It's useful for us to have a record of which candidates have been spoken to about blood cancer in the run up to the election. If they're elected, this will help us to build up our support base in parliament. Similarly, if you get a written response back from one of your candidates, we would love to see it. Please keep Blood Cancer UK's Policy and Influencing team updated by including policy@bloodcancer.org.uk in any emails you send or forward us responses you've received.

5 Remember - keep it neutral

Charities need to stay neutral in election campaigns, so it's important for any campaigning you do with Blood Cancer UK that you keep it politically impartial.

Use our e-action tool to email your candidates



Question bank

We've prepared some questions you might want to ask candidates. You don't need to ask all these questions and feel free to think of your own questions based on your experience, including with your local NHS.

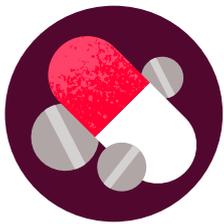
Blood cancer, which includes leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma, is the **fifth most common cancer & third biggest cancer killer**, but it is often overlooked in policy.



Blood cancer symptoms are generally vague and so harder to recognise, and around 30% of people with blood cancer are diagnosed in A&E.

1 If elected, will you commit to meeting with Blood Cancer UK to find out how you can use your voice in parliament to help bring forward the day no one dies of blood cancer or its treatments?

4 If elected, how will your party look to improve the diagnosis experience for people with blood cancer in Scotland?



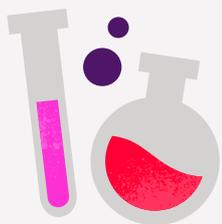
Not all blood cancer medicines approved for use by regulators are being made available to blood cancer patients in Scotland.

2 How will you improve access to innovative new treatments for patients right across the country?

Without sustained investment, Scotland's existing Cancer Strategy is at risk of not being delivered in full.

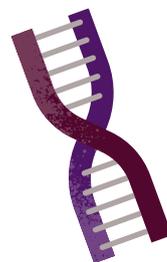


5 Will your party be able to commit to implementing the strategy in full?



In Scotland, just 21% of people with blood cancer discussed clinical trial opportunities at diagnosis.

3 If elected, how will your party make sure that there are more trials made available to blood cancer patients?



Scotland's genomic testing capabilities is falling behind the rest of the UK, and this is starting to be felt by the blood cancer community.

6 If elected, will addressing this be a priority for your party?

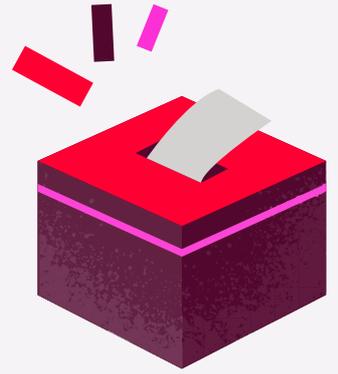
About the elections

What responsibilities does the Scottish Parliament have?

Health is a key issue in the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections because it is fully devolved, meaning the Scottish Government is responsible for how the NHS in Scotland is funded and delivered. For people living with blood cancer, this directly affects diagnosis, access to treatments or clinical trials, and the support and services they rely on.

How do I vote?

To find out more about constituencies in this election, how to register to vote or to vote by post or proxy, as well as information on finding your polling station and completing your ballot, [visit this page.](#)



Other ways to support our work

Join the Blood Cancer UK Policy Collective

Part of our Involvement Network, the Blood Cancer UK Policy Collective is made up of people from across the UK who want to help shape and review our Policy and Influencing work or just want to hear regular updates about the work we're doing. [Sign up here](#) to get involved now and after the election. Contact policy@bloodcancer.org.uk with any questions.

Amplify our message

Many candidates will be active on social media during the election period. Re-share posts from Blood Cancer UK with your local community to reach them.

