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### **Breast Cancer Screening:**

One of the biggest actions we can take to improve cancer survival is to diagnose cancer earlier. Maximising the number of cancers identified through screening allows earlier access to life-saving treatment. I recognise the strength of feeling in our constituency for ministers to do more to improve screening rates, as demonstrated in a recent online petition.

The Government said it is investing in new community diagnostic centres and screening units. But I recognise and share Constituents concerns about the decline in screening rates over recent years. Between 2001/02 and 2009/10, breast cancer screening rates increased from 64% to 77%. But this figure has been declining since 2012/13. And screening rates have still not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

For breast cancer, the current target is that 93% of women should be seen by a specialist within two weeks following urgent referral. But that figure has fallen to 74%.

While there is no doubt COVID-19 impacted cancer pathways, we entered the pandemic with record waiting lists, chronic workforce shortages, and cancer targets repeatedly missed. Waiting lists have now risen to a record high: nearly one in seven people are waiting for treatment. Estimates suggest there could be more than 27,000 people on the waiting list with undiagnosed cancers.

The NHS is underperforming on cancer targets across the board, with waiting time standards routinely missed. Rather than set out a credible plan to improve care, I am concerned that the Government is focussing on moving the goalposts, when its priority should be speeding up diagnosis and treatments for patients. And the Health Secretary has dropped plans for a dedicated cancer strategy.

The Government has had 13 years to address these problems. Instead, I am concerned it has weakened standards for patients, who are paying more in tax but getting worse care.

I support a 10-year plan of reform and modernisation to improve cancer pathways, harnessing technology to fight disease and transform the way we deliver care to diagnose and treat cancers sooner.

In the short term, we must utilise spare capacity in the independent sector to drive down waiting lists, while ensuring long term reform of our NHS to make it fit for the future: shifting the focus to early diagnosis and intervention, including strengthening screening programmes, as well as preventing ill health in the first place.

Taken together, the plan will ensure that 75% of all cancers are diagnosed earlier, at stages one or two, and improve survival rates by hitting all NHS cancer targets within five years, so no patient waits longer than they should.

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