



Cancer in the West Midlands

Executive summary

In 2014 there were 31,260 new cancers diagnosed in the West Midlands, and 7,950 deaths from cancer.

- the rate of cancer incidence in the West Midlands was significantly lower than the England average at 600 new cancers per 100,000 population compared to 609 per 100,000 in England as a whole
- there were estimated to be nearly 89,000 people in the West Midlands either living with, or beyond their diagnosis and treatment for, cancer
- by 2030 it is estimated there will be as many as 135,000 people in the West Midlands living with and beyond cancer

Over the last 10 years the mortality rate from cancer has decreased significantly in the West Midlands. However, in 2014;

- the rate in 2014 was 291 deaths per 100,000 population, which is significantly higher than the rate for England, at 281 deaths per 100,000 population.
- therefore, although the West Midlands all-cancer incidence rate is significantly lower than for England, the mortality rates are significantly higher

The stage of a cancer is important as it helps to determine the treatments required and also indicates the severity of the disease at which a patient sought medical help. Across the West Midlands, in 2014:

- 41% of cancers were diagnosed at an early stage (stage 1 and 2) where the cancer is relatively small and has not spread to other parts of the body
- 21% of the cancers diagnosed were stage 4 cancers, where the cancer has spread to other organs in the body
- cancers diagnosed at stage 4 ranged from 2% for melanoma, 48% for pancreatic cancer and 51% for lung cancer

Across the West Midlands, there is a strong relationship between cancer stage at diagnosis and deprivation.

- of those in the least deprived quintile, 47% of cancers diagnosed were stages 1 or 2, compared with 40% in the most deprived quintile
- conversely, 19% of cancers diagnosed in the least deprived were stage 4 compared with 26% in the most deprived

In terms of preventable risk factors:

- smoking prevalence continues to decline, which has likely contributed to the falling incidence of lung cancer. There is however significant variation across the region in terms of smoking rates which needs to be investigated and addressed.
- high alcohol consumption in the West Midlands is *potentially* contributing to an increase in alcohol related cancers. There is also a need to address the regional variation in alcohol related cancers.
- there are a significantly higher proportion of overweight and obese people in the West Midland along with low levels of physical activity. It is likely that in the coming years that unless preventative action is taken that, there could be a significant increase in cancers associated with alcohol and obesity.

Early detection and treatment of cancer is essential for reducing mortality. Consequently maintaining high uptake of national cancer screening programmes is a significant part of preventative work with many areas in the west of the West Midlands achieving higher uptake than the England average. However there is a clear need for targeted work across Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton as these areas are below the England average on all screening programmes.

Finally, a survey undertaken in 2012 found that 67% of people would like to die at home. However, between 2012 and 2014, fewer than 30% of cancer patients died at home, and nearly 40% died in a hospital. Effective work with partners is essential for improving the end of life care experiences across the West Midlands.

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