



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Andrew Stephenson CBE MP
Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care*

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Your Ref: JM35076
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Joy Morrissey MP
By email to: joy.morrissey.mp@parliament.uk

20 March 2024

Dear Joy,

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 February on behalf of your constituent Dr Geoffrey Maidment about cancer deaths.

I am grateful to you for raising Dr Maidment's concerns.

The analysis referenced is not from a peer-reviewed source and is fundamentally flawed. The authors have not understood that ONS release annual mortality data based on both the year a death occurred and the year a death was registered. These are different datasets, based on different definitions, which have different numbers of deaths in them. The authors have erroneously described the differences between the two datasets as 'discrepancies' and have adjusted for these using an inappropriate method of scaling. This has inflated the number of cancer deaths in young people in 2022, leading them to report an apparent excess.

Analysis from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) shows that deaths involving cancer for those aged zero to 49 were lower than expected in 2020 and 2021, when compared with pre-pandemic mortality trends. In 2022, the number of registered and expected deaths were almost identical. This indicates that we have not seen excess deaths over these periods.

OHID have published this analysis as an addendum to their regular reporting on excess mortality, in the file 'Excess deaths by age group' which can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/excess-mortality-bespoke-analyses.

In addition, survival rates are increasing – with 74.6 per cent of people surviving a year after diagnosis, up from 65.6 per cent in 2005 but we know we have more to do. We have increased access to screening for a range of cancers which leads to earlier diagnosis and makes it more likely that treatment is successful and effective.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**THE RT HON ANDREW STEPHENSON CBE MP
MINISTER OF STATE**