

Northern Ireland Cancer Network (NICaN) Primary Care Bulletin

Welcome to the second edition of the NICaN Primary Care Bulletin.

In this issue you will find:

1. Updated suspected skin cancer referral guidance
2. Upcoming education sessions
3. Vague Symptom Pathway information
4. Ovarian cancer symptom awareness
5. Cancer screening developments
6. Child Cancer Smart resources

Updated NICaN skin cancer referral guidance

The revised NICaN Suspected Skin Cancer Pathway is now available.



Key changes include:

- Use of the NICE weighted 7-point checklist.
- Inclusion of nodular melanoma and dermoscopic suspicion.
- Urgent referral of suspected Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) and when to red flag BCCs in high-risk areas.

[Link to updated guidance here](#)



[Register here for the upcoming education session 'Mole to Melanoma - 7 October 2026](#)

Upcoming cancer & palliative education sessions

Join our one-hour virtual lunchtime sessions for practical, case-based learning relevant to primary care.

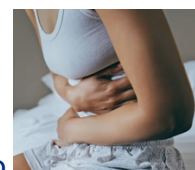


- **7 October 2026:** Melanoma - [Register for the session](#)
- **10 November 2026:** Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer
- **December 2026:** Lower GI Cancer.

Session details are available on the [NICaN website](#) or via the primary care mailing list. Join the mailing list [here](#) or email nican.office@hscni.net. Previous primary care education sessions are available to view on the NICaN website [here](#).

Vague Symptom Pathway

The Northern Ireland Vague Symptoms Pathway provides GPs with rapid assessment for patients where cancer is suspected but who do not meet the criteria for an existing site-specific red flag referral pathway.



This regional service is available to all GP practices across Northern Ireland. Access referral criteria, investigation requirements and supporting guidance [here](#).

Ovarian cancer: recognising the signs and symptoms

This Gynaecological Cancer Awareness Month, Target Ovarian Cancer is highlighting four key symptoms through its patient awareness campaign.

[Click the poster to view & download](#) to share within your practice.

Visit the [Target Ovarian Cancer website](#) for further information and patient resources.



NICaN on EOLAS

Access NICaN guidance and resources on the EOLAS app. Scan the QR code for download information then search 'Spaces' for NICaN once downloaded.



Cancer screening updates

Work is progressing on two important cancer screening developments in Northern Ireland:



- **Bowel cancer screening:** A ministerial announcement on 30 September 2026 confirmed that bowel screening will expand in phases. Starting with age 59 from 2 November 2026 extending to everyone aged 50 to 74 by 2031.
- **Targeted lung cancer screening:** Work is underway, led by PHA, to assess the feasibility and requirements of introducing targeted lung cancer screening in Northern Ireland. Further updates will be shared as plans develop.

Smoking status: a small update with a big impact

Accurate smoking status records will be vital for identifying patients who may be eligible for lung cancer screening. Practices are encouraged to record whether patients are current, former or never smokers, and update this whenever an appropriate opportunity arises. Please continue to offer smoking cessation support where appropriate.



Looking ahead: NICA suspect cancer referral guidance updates

Our guidelines for urology, haematology and gynaecology suspected cancer referral are under review.



We are continuing to work with primary & secondary care colleagues across Northern Ireland to develop and refine referral and diagnostic pathways. Our goal to improve access to investigations in primary care to support earlier cancer diagnosis for our patients.

A leadership update from NICA



Mr Damian McKay steps down as Medical Director for the SPPG Cancer Programme and NICA at the end of September.

Damian demonstrated strong commitment to working collaboratively with GP colleagues across Northern Ireland and was a passionate advocate for the vital role of general practice in shaping cancer care. His support for primary care and meaningful clinical engagement has been greatly valued. We thank Damian for his leadership and wish him every success for the future.

Supporting earlier diagnosis of childhood cancer

Child Cancer Smart provides evidence-based resources to help primary care teams recognise possible signs and symptoms of cancer in children and young people. Healthcare professionals are encouraged to remain alert to persistent, unexplained or concerning symptoms and refer appropriately. [Access Child Cancer Smart resources.](#)



The Children & Young People's Cancer Association

Trusted health apps to support people living with cancer

Signpost patients to the Macmillan App Library for trusted digital support with cancer, wellbeing and everyday needs. [Explore the app library.](#)

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CANCER SUPPORT

Join the mailing list

Scan the QR code to join our mailing list for the latest NICA primary care updates, education sessions and previous teaching resources.



We value your input

We welcome your feedback, ideas and suggestions for future topics at:

Nican.Office@hscni.net

