WE ARE MACMILLAN. CANCER SUPPORT

CANCER CARE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The rich picture of how people rate the care they received

People with cancer need person-centred care which provides access to the support that's right for them. In 2015 the first ever **Northern Ireland Cancer Patient Experience Survey** took place to capture the views of those who have been through the system. Over 3,200 patients took part, providing results that will be used to improve cancer care and support across Northern Ireland.

What do cancer patients in Northern Ireland think about their care?

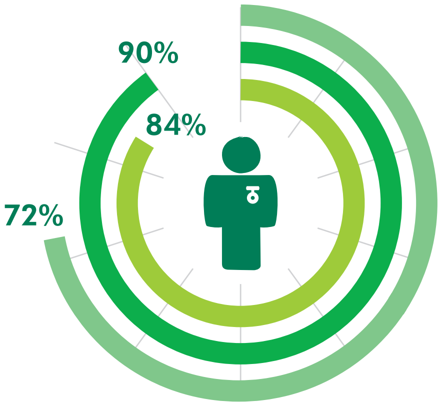
The vast majority of patients rated their care as highly positive – **92%** selected 'excellent' or 'very good'.

88% of patients said doctors and nurses always treated them with respect and dignity.

There is room for improvement, particularly around communication and signposting to non-clinical support. More equal access to Clinical Nurse Specialists and care planning could help to address this.

Patient experience is better with access to a Clinical Nurse Specialist

Patients with a Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) had a significantly more positive experience than those without. **95%** of people who had access to a CNS rated their overall care as 'excellent' or 'very good', but this drops to **86%** for those with no CNS.



But just **72% in Northern Ireland** had been given a CNS (compared with **90% in England** and **84% in Scotland**).

Whether or not a patient has access to a CNS can depend on the **type of cancer** they are diagnosed with.

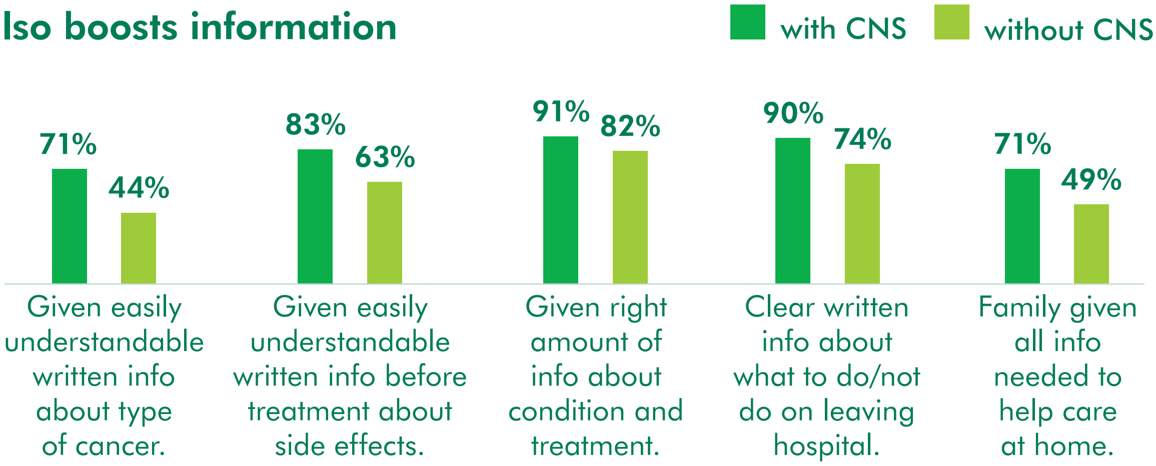
These are the tumour sites with the **highest** and **lowest** proportions of CNS provision.

- **94% Breast**
- **82% Gynaecological**
- **73% Brain/Central nervous system**
- **63% Colorectal/Lower GI**
- **62% Other**
- **53% Urological**

Just **7%** of patients without a CNS were offered a written assessment and care plan, compared to **27%** of those who had a CNS.

CNS access also boosts information

The **positive impact of having a CNS** is especially clear when the level of information provided to patients is examined.



Diagnosis

87% of patients were told they had cancer sensitively.

Of those who responded and felt the question relevant, **21% were not told** they could take someone with them to the appointment when they were first told they had cancer.

Living with and beyond cancer

Of those who would have liked to, **76%** of patients had a discussion about the impact cancer would have on their day to day activities. But almost **one in four people didn't (24%)**.

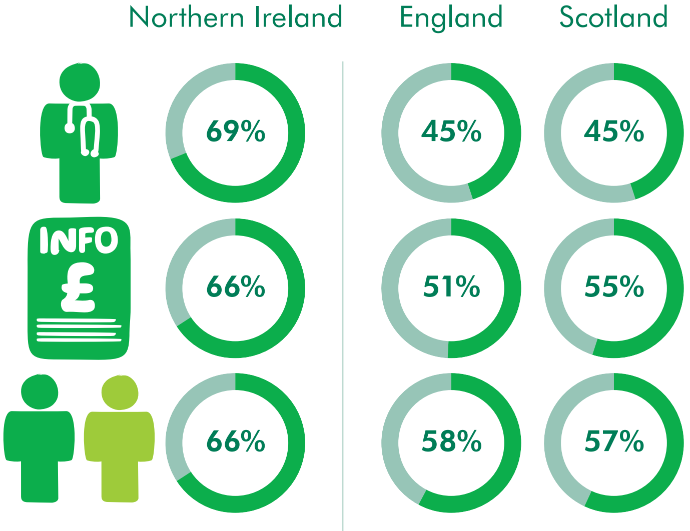
Only **58%** said they were definitely told about future side effects.

Care plans

Just **21%** of patients were offered a **written care plan**.

Many more who had a care plan said they got enough support from health or social care services after treatment – **83%** compared to **60%** of those without a care plan.

Emotional, practical and financial support



69% of patients say they got **enough support** from health or social services after treatment. This compares positively to England and Scotland (both **45%**).

66% of patients got **information on financial help and benefits advice**. This compares favourably to England **(51%)** and Scotland **(55%)**.

66% of patients say that their **family** got all the information needed to help care for their loved one at home. This compares favourably to England **(58%)** and Scotland **(57%)**.

These findings show that cancer care in Northern Ireland is rated highly by patients. But there are areas which require further improvement to allow all patients equal access to the benefits of a CNS. The new CNS workforce plan – a new five-year initiative to fund approximately 60 cancer CNS and support worker posts – should go a long way to addressing these inequalities, particularly across different tumour sites.

The Northern Ireland Cancer Patient Experience Survey was conducted in partnership by the Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care Board and Macmillan Cancer Support. It was administered by Quality Health. Full research reports are available at quality-health.co.uk/resources/surveys/
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