Help us to Survive & Thrive

Emergency Appeal
2020

We Need your Help.

Today four children will be diagnosed with cancer in the UK. Of those who survive 60% will suffer late effects caused by treatments used to save their lives. These late effects can include bone and mobility issues, organ problems and developmental issues that require lifelong support from the NHS. **Childhood cancer has a lasting impact on those diagnosed and their families, and currently Covid19 is making this worse.**

Pressure on the NHS and GP's means patients are facing delays in diagnosis, treatment and support. In addition many families are facing tough decisions around treatments that will significantly reduce their child's immune system, putting them at risk.

At Kidscan Children's Cancer Research we are dedicated to ensuring that children have better treatments. Treatments that do not cause short or long term side effects. We believe that not even a pandemic should force a parent to make a decision about treatments that can put their child at risk, or stop a child who is suffering from late-effects from receiving the support they need. Because we believe that better treatments should be available in the first place.

Right now, something incredible is happening. Scientists and researchers across the globe are coming together to fight Covid19 in an unprecedented response, and many of the techniques and new communication methods being used to fight Covid19, may lead to breakthroughs in childhood cancer research.

We believe that it is important that we can take advantage of this rapid advancement in scientific collaboration, to find the treatments that children deserve. However, it costs between £2,000 and £65,000 to fund a single research project and in the current climate we simply cannot fund this level of research. We estimate that because of Covid19 **we have lost over half of our income.** With the cancellation of mass participation events and the impact of social distancing measures, we expect that this will continue.

So we are asking for your support. Please help us to Survive & Thrive this pandemic, so we can help children diagnosed with cancer do the same.

Impact on Diagnosis

Compared to adults, children often experience a delay in diagnosis, either down to a lack of awareness or because symptoms are misdiagnosed or misunderstood for an extended period of time.

> *Amy had a cough in the late October with a temperature that wouldn't go down. We took her to A+E in but they sent us home, said it might be a flu or a cold. I said to my friend who is a doctor, I've googled it and it says it could be leukaemia, but she laughed and said don't google things like that. Then one night Amy was holding onto her chest so I took her to A+E again but we were sent home. The third time I took her, because of a temperature that wasn't going anywhere, they took a blood sample and they told me then and there"*

This delay can mean that by the time the child is diagnosed, the cancer is often advanced leaving the child with less treatment options. As a result children may require more aggressive treatments such as higher doses of chemotherapy and radiotherapy or more invasive surgery. These treatments are often designed for adults and can damage their bodies, leaving them with severe side effects that can last a lifetime

Because of the NHS response to Covid19, cancer diagnosis across the country has been impacted for both adults and children, increasing diagnosis time further. Less GP appointments, have led to less referrals, and a pause in testing and screening has led to many being unable to receive the diagnosis they need. Our concern is that for children who already experience delays in diagnosis, Covid19 will mean many will be diagnosed later, increasing the need for more aggressive treatments that can cause more severe late effects.

References: https://www.cclg.org.uk/ChildCancerSmart, https://scienceblog.cancerresearchuk.org

Impact on Treatment

Childhood cancers differ to those found in adults and although some occur in both, they act differently in children's growing bodies. Because of a lack of child specific treatments, options are limited. As a result children receive treatments that can cause short term side effects such as reduced function of the immune system.

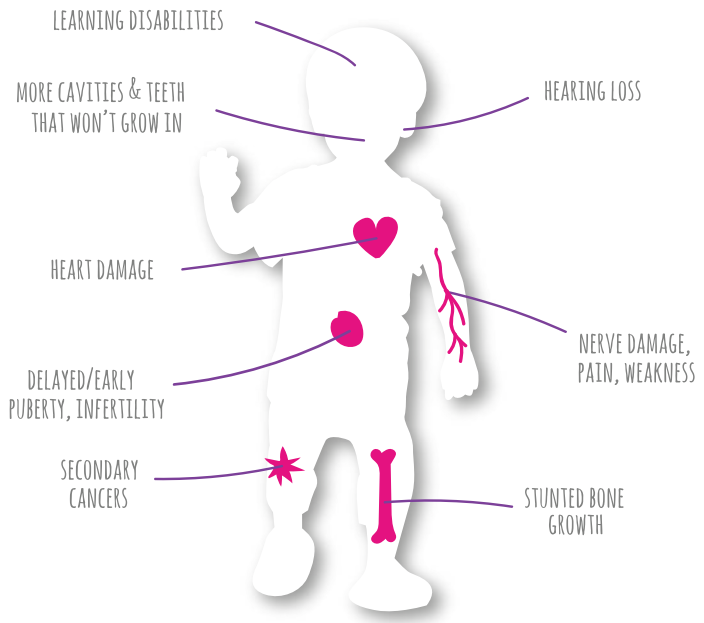
Because of Covid19 many families have had to have difficult conversations around treatment options, and ultimately pausing treatments that would move their children to the vulnerable group. Conversations families would not need to have if treatments did not cause short term or long term side effects.

> Since she was 16 months old Emma has needed treatment to halt the growth of a brain tumour. During lockdown she was told she needed more treatment.
>
> *We're all thinking that if they can defer it to a safer point in time that'll be a better treatment for her. It's a balancing act and ultimately a lot of it will come down to capacity. We know she's got to have horrendous treatment and that coronavirus could have a severe impact on that. Added to that risk, is the pressure of time as we know the tumour is growing. We've got to wait until someone decides what they can do*

Although the NHS is beginning to return to normal, delays in treatment may mean more children will require aggressive treatments that will cause lasting damage to their bodies. And if another spike hits the country we worry that parents will face more difficult decisions and further delays in treatment will be caused.

Impact on After Care

Although childhood cancer survival rates have significantly improved, the treatments used are not designed for children's growing bodies and can cause damage to their healthy cells. This damage can leave them with lifelong side effects (also known as late-effects) that require further treatment or support from the NHS later in life.



During lockdown many have been unable to access the treatment they need to manage their late effects, and a with a backlog of routine appointments and surgeries to be completed in the NHS, this will continue. These appointments, surgeries and support sessions would not be needed if treatments that do not cause late effects where available.

References: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-52984742

Impact on Research

Covid19 has already had a significant impact on medical research in the UK. According to the Association of Medical Research Charities, 18% of research spend in universities has been cut or cancelled, and 70% clinical trials and studies have been stopped, paused or delayed.

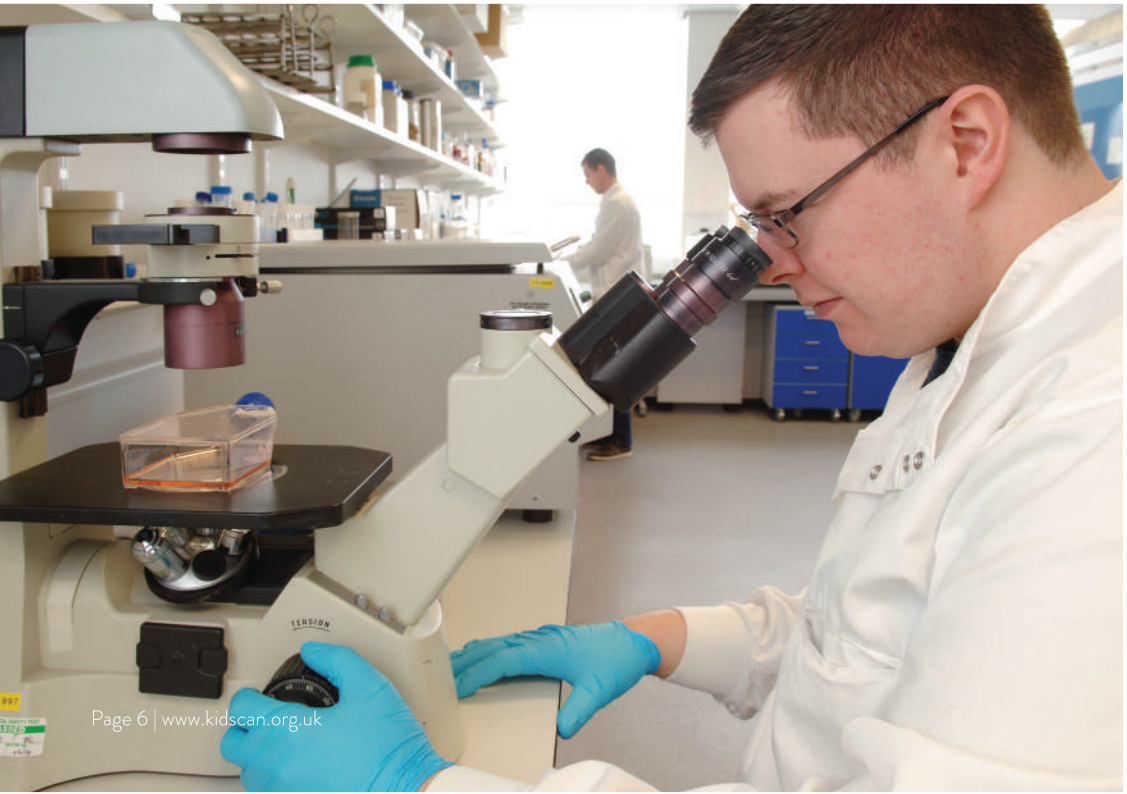
In addition to this immediate impact, AMRC predict that due to a 38% loss in fundraising income across the charity sector, there will be a shortfall of £310 million, resulting in a 41% decrease in UK medical research spend.

> *In this country, a huge percentage of cancer research is funded by the charity sector. I think it's not only Kidscan that's going to be impacted by a lack of fundraising, it's the charity sector that funds cancer research both for adults and children too*
>
> **Dave Pye**
> **Scientific Director**

In the UK only 3.5% of cancer research, is dedicated to finding new treatments for children diagnosed with cancer. This is because the incident rate of childhood cancer is low in comparison to adult cancer, making the development of new drugs less profitable. As a result, we find that less researchers focus on the development of new treatments for children, as they rely on securing funding which is more readily available for adult cancer research.

We fear that as research spend decreases in a market that favours adult cancer research, researchers will be left with no option but to focus on adult cancer research instead. As the AMRC estimates that it will take 4.5 years for medical research spend to recover to normal levels, we fear this will set childhood cancer research back significantly.

References: https://www.amrc.org.uk/covid-19-the-risk-to-amrc-charities | https://www.ncri.org.uk



How You can Help.

We are one of the only charities in the UK solely dedicated to finding safe new treatments for children diagnosed with cancer. Since lockdown we have seen an overwhelming increase in the number of funding requests. You can help us to meet demand and take advantage of the scientific advancements happening right now.

At Kidscan we offer three levels of funding:

£2,000

Student Placement Grants

Allow students completing undergraduate & postgraduate degrees to assist with PhD research projects, boosting productivity whilst expose more researchers to the field, strengthening the future of childhood cancer research.

£10,000+

Pump-Priming Grants

Designed to fund projects in the early stages of development that would lead to further research or contribute towards early stage clinical trials of new therapeutic treatments for children.

£65,000

PhD Studentships

PhD Studentships fund three year research projects that aim to further childhood cancer research.

From donations to fundraising support, if you can help Kidscan to Survive and Thrive please get in touch with one of our team today:

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