

## Inquiry into the Legal Definition of Terminal Illness, May 2019

Tenovus Cancer Care is Wales' leading cancer charity. Our aims are simple. We want to help prevent, treat and find a cure for cancer.

We do this by offering support, advice and treatment to cancer patients and their loved ones. We also promote healthy lifestyles and fund cancer research to find new ways to prevent it, diagnose it, and treat it.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important consultation.

- Q1. For the purpose of gaining fast-track access to benefits, is the current legal definition of being terminally ill as having six months left to live fit for purpose?**
- Q2. Does the six month definition help or hinder people affected by terminal illness to receive the support that they need?**

The sudden and unexpected loss of income, coupled with hidden costs, the worry, and stress of financial pressure that accompanies a cancer diagnosis all place a huge burden on people. Tenovus Cancer Care recognises this; that's why our skilled Cancer Support Advisors are on hand to tell people affected by cancer if there's any money they might be entitled to. So when cancer patients or their loved ones have money on their mind, they have someone to talk to. When someone is nearing the end of their life for a known reason the magnitude of these pressures are amplified significantly.

The complex warren of the benefit application process is difficult enough under normal circumstances, let alone during this period of heightened distress. **The existence of a fast-track process for people with terminal illness is very helpful.** It relieves pressure from individuals and their families at a time when priorities will be focussed on the time that remains; not red tape and a system that is not known for its user friendly credentials.

However there is a common misconception regarding the six month rule. Many interpret it as someone having less than 6 months left to live. This neglects the important part of the rule that if it would not be unexpected for them to pass away within 6 months. It is difficult to put a precise end date on someone's life; particularly in light of medical advances and the management of terminal diseases. In reality few clients receive a prognosis of less than 6 months, with many receiving a prognosis in excess of 9 or even 18 months. Some consultants are still willing to complete the DS1500 form (DWP form that confirms terminal illness) but some are very stringent.

Therefore, Tenovus Cancer Care support the fast-track process for access to benefits however we call for the 'six month rule' to be scrapped in favour of a revised definition that classifies anyone as terminally ill if they diagnosed with a progressively degenerative disease where death is an expected consequence.