

Glossary: NPACa State of the Nation Report 2026

Adjuvant therapy – cancer treatment such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy that is given after primary treatment (typically surgery, for pancreatic cancer), to maximise effectiveness and reduce the chance of cancer recurrence.

Ampulla of Vater – a small structure within the wall of the duodenum (first part of the small bowel) where the common bile duct meets the pancreatic duct.

Bile duct – a small tube-like structure that carries bile (digestive fluid) from the liver and gall bladder to the small bowel.

Biliary drainage – a procedure that aids in clearing blockages from the bile ducts.

Biliary stent – a small tube (either made from plastic or metal) that is placed into a bile duct to relieve obstruction or narrowing of the ducts, which keeps bile ducts open and allows bile to flow normally.

Cancer Alliance – a network of NHS Trusts (in England) that work together to coordinate the care of people with cancer within a region.

Clinical nurse specialist – a registered nurse with an advanced nursing role to provide specialist care and advice to patients in a certain medical speciality.

Disease-targeted treatment – various treatments given with the aim of killing or removing the cancerous tissue (such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy).

Extrahepatic bile duct – bile ducts (see above) which are located outside of the liver. They carry bile (digestive fluid) from the liver and gallbladder to the small bowel.

Exocrine – relates to glands in the body which release bodily juices through small openings onto a body surface. In relation to pancreatic cancer, the pancreas has exocrine features as it releases digestive juices to aid digestion.

FDG-PET/CT – a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan combined with Computerised Tomography (CT) using 18F-fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) as the tracer. A PET-CT scan is a type of imaging technique where a patient is injected with a small amount of radioactive tracer to assess metabolic activity in the body. Cancer cells have a very high metabolic rate, so show up brightly on this test. The images from a PET-CT scan give us a more detailed picture of tumour activity than a routine CT scan.

Gy/F or Grays/Fractions – external beam radiotherapy treatment is usually delivered over several treatment sessions. A course of radiotherapy is described as the full planned dose of

radiation in Grays (Gy), and the number of treatment sessions (fractions, F) over which the dose is delivered. For example, 30Gy/15F would describe a course of 30 Grays of radiation delivered over 15 sessions.

HES-APC – Hospital Episode Statistics Admitted Patient Care – dataset containing details about admitted patient care at NHS hospitals in England. This includes clinical information about diagnoses and treatments, and administrative information about dates of admission and discharge, and where patients were treated.

HES-OP – Hospital Episode Statistics Outpatients – dataset containing details about outpatient appointments at NHS hospitals in England.

HPB (hepatopancreatobiliary or hepatobiliary and pancreatic) – a term used to collectively refer to some of the organs of the digestive system, namely the liver, pancreas, gallbladder, bile ducts and small intestine.

ICD-10 – the 10th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (a medical classification list). The list of medical codes used to identify and categorise medical diagnoses.

IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) - a measure of relative deprivation in a particular small area (of ~1,500 residents or 650 households).

Interquartile range (IQR) – a statistical measure of the spread of values in a dataset. It demonstrates the difference between the first quartile (lower 25% of results) and the third quartile (upper 25% of results), i.e. describes the spread of the middle 50% of the data.

Jaundice – a medical condition where high levels of bilirubin (a chemical in your body) cause your skin, eyes and inside of your mouth to turn yellow. In the context of pancreatic cancer, this can occur due to the cancer blocking the drainage of bilirubin (obstructive jaundice).

Median – a statistical measure referring to the middle value in a dataset.

Metastatic – a term used to refer to the spread of disease from an initial or primary site to a different secondary site, for example from the pancreas to the liver or lungs.

MDT (multi-disciplinary team) – teams consisting of individuals drawn from various disciplines who come together to achieve a common goal: to meet and agree the diagnosis and treatment plan. These can be categorised as

- a. **specialist** (multi-disciplinary teams with particular expertise in certain areas, eg. Specialists in pancreatic cancer surgery who are often based in specialist cancer centres) or
- b. **local** (multi-disciplinary teams within local hospitals)

MRI (Magnetic resonance imaging) - a medical imaging technique used in radiology to form pictures of the body using strong magnetic fields.

NATCAN - The National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre (NATCAN) is a national centre of excellence which delivers ten national cancer audits in England and Wales. It has been commissioned by the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership (HQIP), on behalf of NHS England and the Welsh Government. NATCAN is part of the Clinical Effectiveness Unit (CEU) in London – a collaboration between the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSEng) and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

NCRD (National Cancer Registration Data) - the “gold standard” cancer registration data for England. It contains information on all aspects of the cancer registration for everyone diagnosed with cancer in England. Undergoes extensive quality control by NDRS before release.

National Disease Registration Service (NDRS) – a service that collects and analyses data on cancer and rare diseases in the UK as part of NHS England.

Neoadjuvant therapy – a term used to describe anti-cancer treatment (such as chemotherapy, hormones or radiation) given before the main treatment (such as surgery). The intent of this treatment is to reduce the size of the tumour, to improve the success of the main treatment or reduce the need for a more extensive procedure.

Neuroendocrine tumours – tumours that start from cells which produce hormones in the body. In pancreatic cancer this is very relevant as the pancreas has several cell types which produce hormones – these cells can become cancerous and the tumours will secrete hormones in an uncontrolled fashion. The treatments for these tumours are mainly hormone-based, and therefore they are managed quite differently from other pancreatic cancer tumour types.

NHS (National Health Service) – the publicly funded healthcare system in the UK.

NHS Trust – an organisational unit within the NHS in England that delivers healthcare services to people within a particular area.

NICE – The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is an independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.

Pancreas – an organ in the human digestive system within the abdomen, which plays a major role in digesting food and regulating blood sugar.

Pancreatic Cancer UK (PCUK) – a charity focused on improving the lives of people affected by pancreatic cancer.

PERT (pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy) – medication used to replace enzymes which would normally be made within the pancreas. When patients have pancreatic cancer, or part of the pancreas is removed in a surgical procedure, the pancreas is unable to produce these enzymes which help to break down food, so PERT is required to aid digestion.

Performance status – a classification system to describe a person’s functional status whilst performing routine activities of daily living. Scores range from 0 (fully active with no restrictions) to 5 (dead). Note: only scores of 0-4 will be included in the audit.

Radiotherapy – a treatment that uses radiation to kill tumour cells and so shrinks the tumour. It can be used together with surgery or chemotherapy to reduce disease.

‘Rapid’ cancer registration dataset – a dataset which provides a quicker source of cancer data compared to the gold standard registration process.

Resectable – if a pancreatic cancer is described as resectable, this means that it is considered to be removable by surgery.

RCS – the Royal College of Surgeons of England is an independent professional body committed to enabling surgeons to achieve and maintain the highest standards of surgical practice and patient care. As part of this it supports audit and the evaluation of clinical effectiveness for surgery.

Stage / TNM (Tumour / Nodal / Metastatic) stage – an international classification system to classify the extent of a cancer using information on the tumour size, lymph node status, and the presence or absence of metastatic disease. Overall cancer stages range from 1 (localised disease) to 4 (advanced disease) which is determined by the extent of the tumour size, the nodal disease burden and the presence or absence of metastatic disease.

Supportive treatment – a term used to refer to various treatments which can be given alongside medical treatment, or alone, to aid in managing treatment side effects or cancer-related symptoms.

Surgical resection – a medical treatment that involves surgically removing all, or part, of a tissue, structure or organ.

Systemic anti-cancer therapy (SACT) – a term used to refer to medication given to treat cancer (eg. Chemotherapy or immunotherapy).

Welsh local health board (LHB) – local authorities in Wales that plan and deliver NHS services to a particular area.

Whipple procedure – also known as pancreaticoduodenectomy – a complex surgical procedure whereby the head of the pancreas is removed (along with the gallbladder, bile duct the first part of the small intestine) most often performed to remove cancerous lesions located at the head of the pancreas.