Bronchiectasis
Policy Network UK

Bronchiectasis in the UK

A hidden burden that demands better care

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Pronounced
brong·kee·EK·tuh·siss

WHAT IS BRONCHIECTASIS?

Bronchiectasis is a respiratory condition that causes **permanent lung damage** and affects **over 300,000 people in the UK.**[1-3]

It is characterised by a **persistent cough, thick mucus and repeated chest infections.**[4]

Flare-ups can lead to **exhaustion, chest pain and coughing up blood.**[5] People may need to **take antibiotics regularly;** and when symptoms are particularly severe, they may need to **stay in hospital for treatment.**[5,6]

The condition can affect people's ability to work or attend school, **impacting their quality of life and mental health.**[7-9]

Over
300k
people in the UK affected by bronchiectasis

THE HEALTH SYSTEM IS FAILING PEOPLE WITH BRONCHIECTASIS:†

Low awareness in primary care and complex diagnostic pathways lead to **delays in diagnosis and in access to care**.

Gaps in specialist, multidisciplinary care lead to **people's symptoms being poorly managed**.

Poor public awareness leads to **widespread stigma** and prevents people with bronchiectasis from knowing how to manage their symptoms.

Gaps in data lead to **policy- and decision-makers lacking understanding** of the disease's toll and how care can be improved.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO PROACTIVE, COORDINATED BEST-PRACTICE CARE COULD LEAD TO:†

- **timely detection and faster diagnosis**[6]
- **fewer avoidable flare-ups and hospitalisations, which could lessen system pressures and costs**[6,10]
- **reduced exposure to certain antibiotics and consequently lower risk of antimicrobial resistance**[11]
- **improved symptom control and quality of life.**[6]

† Findings from policy brief *Bronchiectasis in the UK: a hidden burden that demands better care.*

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Act now to improve bronchiectasis care

The Bronchiectasis Policy Network UK calls on system leaders and policymakers in the UK to ensure that everyone with bronchiectasis, regardless of where they live, can access the care and support they need.

Taken together, these actions represent a pathway toward a more equitable and person-centred approach to bronchiectasis care – one that aligns closely with the NHS's strategic priorities for earlier diagnosis, community-based care and improved outcomes for chronic conditions.

WE CALL ON **UK POLICY- AND DECISION-MAKERS** TO:

- embed bronchiectasis in national respiratory policy with clear service standards
- deliver a national bronchiectasis care pathway and guidelines
- commission and fund specialist bronchiectasis services
- include bronchiectasis in national respiratory transformation programmes
- strengthen data and accountability through better primary care coding, national auditing and reporting
- invest in research to understand the true burden of bronchiectasis and identify effective models of care.

WE CALL ON **INTEGRATED CARE BOARDS (ICBs) AND HEALTH BOARDS** TO:

- prioritise bronchiectasis in local respiratory strategies, including innovative hub-and-spoke models, to bring specialist care closer to home
- work with primary care providers to identify undiagnosed or misdiagnosed cases by reviewing records and using digital tools.

WE CALL ON **PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES** TO:

- raise awareness and skills in the workforce to help ensure that bronchiectasis is recognised, diagnosed and managed consistently in primary and secondary care.

WE CALL ON **PATIENT ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS** TO:

- increase public awareness so people with persistent symptoms seek help and diagnosis earlier
- provide patients with clear, accessible information about bronchiectasis, self-management and what good-quality care looks like.

References

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Bronchiectasis Policy Network UK is a multidisciplinary collaboration of healthcare professionals, patient advocates and policy professionals, established to improve care and outcomes for people living with bronchiectasis in the UK. The network has developed a policy brief on the major barriers to, and opportunities for, improved bronchiectasis care, with the key findings from that research summarised in this infographic.

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