

East Midlands Cancer Alliance (EMCA) Board Briefing Meeting held 26th January 2026

For the attention of EMCA Board members, Accountable Officers, CEOs, Cancer Senior Responsible Officers (SROs), Cancer Managers and Cancer Leads in ICBs and Trusts:

The East Midlands Cancer Alliance (EMCA) Board met on 26th January 2026 via MS Teams to review the work and progress of partner organisations across EMCA. Richard Mitchell chaired the meeting. The Board has representation from the five East Midlands ICBs across both commissioning, medical and provider organisations. It also has representatives from Specialised Commissioning, Public Health, Workforce Training and Education, Macmillan, and Cancer Research UK. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed contributions from all colleagues.

EMCA Cancer Alliance Update

Vicky Millward, Managing Director of EMCA, shared an update regarding the 2026-27 Cancer Alliance Planning Support Pack, highlighting the Alliance's continued commitment to:

- Cancer care transformation
- The need to return to cancer waiting time standards
- The prioritisation of early diagnosis, operational performance, and reducing health inequalities.

Vicky also highlighted EMCA's Quarter three achievements, including:

- The re-launch of the Breast Expert Clinical Advisory Group (ECAG), with a clear focus on improving outcomes, reducing variation, enhancing patient experience, and addressing inequalities.
- The launch of the EMCA "Days Matter" Campaign, which is a 100-day, clinically led programme to accelerate progress across cancer diagnostic and treatment pathways.
- EMCA delivered its first region-wide "Mouth Cancer Action Month" campaign, focusing on high-risk communities in Leicester.
- Through the Communities Food and Wellbeing Hub, two wellbeing events were delivered in Leicester and Loughborough, engaging 142 participants from diverse communities. A culturally sensitive women's health workshop in Lincolnshire also supported improved engagement on cervical screening and HPV awareness.
- The Midlands Cancer Alliances Life Science Hub continues to build momentum, strengthening collaboration between pathway leads, clinical teams and industry partners.

Performance Update

Yasmin Bhatt, EMCA Operational Performance Senior Programme Manager, presented an update on current performance metrics and highlighted areas of continued focus across the region. While performance against the Faster Diagnosis Standard (FDS), 31-day, and particularly the 62-day standards remain below the desired trajectory, these challenges are consistent with national trends and continue to be closely monitored.

Proactive work is underway to drive improvement, with renewed emphasis on aligning recovery actions across the systems and providers. Key areas of focus include strengthening governance arrangements and accelerating delivery through the "Days Matter" Programme, ensuring a more coordinated and effective approach to recovery.

Days Matter

Yasmin Bhatt, EMCA Operational Performance Senior Programme Manager, provided an update on the progress of the “Days Matter” programme, launched in November 2025. This campaign has rapidly mobilised and since completed its first 30-day improvement cycle. Most providers are actively engaged across the priority tumour sites, reflecting shared commitment to delivering improvements for patients across the region.

The start of the 60-day cycle commenced on Monday 26 January 2026, with key priorities including:

- Establish clear, measurable deliverables for each tumour site and provider
- Strengthen cross-provider learning through the EMCA Cancer Managers meeting

Programme Overview

Rebecca Dove, EMCA Governance Senior Programme Manager, provided a comprehensive update on programme delivery, highlighting continued progress alongside key risks and financial management activity.

Rebecca outlined timelines for the annual plan submissions together with the allocation of the Service Development Fund (SDF), noting strong oversight arrangements in place. The challenges were reported within the lung cancer screening and skin pathways, emphasising that these are being proactively managed through established mitigations and robust risk management processes.

Lung Cancer Screening

ICB Leads provided an update on the rollout of Lung Cancer Screening, noting good progress in contract awards at Lincs, LLR, and Northants. NNICB are going ahead with plans to further roll out, which will enable them to reach the 100% capacity. The underactivity by In health over the last few months was raised – this is a national concern. DDICB shared the plans to go out to full competitive and fair ITT procurement. The importance of developing accurate trajectories and securing timely executive sign-off to enable access to national funding needs to be prioritised.

EMCA Finance Update

Vicky Millward, EMCA Managing Director, presented a position statement on financial allocations, confirming that SDF funding allocation for 2025/26 is on track, with all funds allocated by the end of December 2025.

Life Sciences Hub

Alison Tonge, Executive Director of Strategy, Innovation and Planning at the Arden and Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit, provided an update on the development of the Midlands Cancer Alliance’s Life Sciences Partnership Hub.

Significant progress reported, noting strong engagement from industry partners and the submission of multiple high-quality proposals. The highlights were shared for the robust three-stage evaluation process, which is now underway to identify projects with the greatest potential value for the region, particularly those focusing on AI innovation, digital integration, and workforce development.

The emerging plans were outlined to establish a sustainable suite of regional offers, including a call-off process and tailored training modules, and emphasised efforts to strengthen alignment between academic partners and industry-led initiatives to maximise regional impact.

Documents for Information

- Screening Report
- Specialised Commissioning Report
- EMCA Communication Report
- EMCA Newsletter
- Primary Care Newsletter

Future Board Meeting Details:

Date: Monday 23rd March 2026

Time: 01:00–03:00pm

Venue: MS Teams

EMCA ICB Leads contact details:

East Midlands ICSs	EMCA Board Representative/s ICS Lead
Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland	Adam Andrews, Adam.andrews@nhs.net
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