Understanding the burden and characteristics of older people living with and beyond cancer across the UK
Produced by the National Cancer Intelligence Network (NCIN)
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INTRODUCTION
Around two million people are currently living in the UK with a cancer diagnosis, predicted to increase to four million by 2030(1). As part of the Macmillan-NCIN partnership, work programme national patient-level cancer datasets are being used to describe this population including their characteristics and needs. There is little granular information about the cancer survivorship population, particularly those who are more likely to be living with cancer for longer.

The two million cancer survivors estimate is based on ‘Complete Prevalence’, which accounts for all people alive ever diagnosed with cancer in the UK. We aim to produce and analyse Complete Prevalence data in the future, but, for now, we present 20-year cancer prevalence data: this accounted for 1.8 million people at the end of the 2010. We have analysed the data for older people to build a greater understanding of the burden and needs of this population.

There were over 1 million cancer survivors in the UK aged 65 and over that were diagnosed with cancer between 1991-2010, and still alive at the end of 2010

This accounted for 60% of the 1.8 million people diagnosed and living with cancer at the end of 2010, and accounted for 11% of all people aged 65 and over.

More than 50/50 distribution between male and female cancer survivors aged 75 and over at the end of the 20-year period

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Around 137,000 of the male cancer survivors aged 75 and over at the end of the 20 year period had a diagnosis of prostate cancer making it the most common cancer type for all the survivors in this period.

CONCLUSION
For the first time our study provides an accurate and more detailed national picture of older people living with and beyond cancer in the UK. The analysis shows the number of older people that have been diagnosed and living with cancer, and demonstrates how care provision and support varies across the different stages their pathway. Understanding the number and characteristics of older people diagnosed with cancer is essential information that can be used to inform service planning, treatment provision and support for older people at the right time and in the right place, particularly as the number of people living with cancer rises.

Future work will explore the data in more detail, through more in depth analysis and discussion with experts for insight on the findings. We will also analyse prevalence over a longer period (e.g complete prevalence) and by other variables (e.g comorbidities, multiple primaries) to further understand the needs of older people living with cancer.

UK 20-Year Cancer Prevalence based on people diagnosed with cancer between 1991 and 2010 and still alive at the end of 2010

METHODS
This work uses patient-level datasets from the National Cancer Data Repository to build our understanding of older people living with and beyond cancer in the UK. The analysis looks at 20-year prevalence based on people diagnosed with cancer between 1991 and 2010. We identify people living with and beyond cancer at the end of 2010, based on their age at that time. We then explore the characteristics and needs of this population including cancer type, age, sex, location, deprivation, time since diagnosis and care pathways.

For analysis for all cancers combined we have counted only the first diagnosed tumour in each person in the 20 year period. For analysis by cancer type, we have counted the first specific cancer diagnosed in each person.

We use ‘cancer survivors’ to mean anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer and still alive at the end of the 20-year period, regardless of whether their cancer has been cured, is in remission or is still present.

For those aged 75 and over at the end of the 20 year period that had a diagnosis of breast cancer, making it the most common cancer type for these survivors

Almost 129,000 of women cancer survivors aged 75 and over at the end of the 2010 year period had a diagnosis of breast cancer, making it the second most common cancer type in women – also true for men - with 56,856 women having had a diagnosis of this cancer in the 20-year period. This is less than half of the number of diagnoses for breast cancer, but at least more than double than any of the other cancers types analysed.

The cancer groupings used here include a disparate collection of tumour types with markedly different survival patterns. Further analyses will explore specific cancer types.

NOTES / REFERENCES / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
* The prevalence for Northern Ireland is 18-year prevalence data as are available from 1993 to 2010.
** All malignant cancers excluding non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) (ICD10 codes C00-C97, excluding C44).
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