

**ANSWER
CANCER**



Barriers to Breast, Bowel and Cervical
Screening – Tackling Inequalities

National screening programmes have an important role to play in reducing health inequalities. Within the NHS it is acknowledged that variation in participation exists both within and between national screening programmes and, generally, people at higher risk of cancer are less likely to participate.

The following sets out details of barriers that have been identified over the past 4 years of delivery of the Answer Cancer Programme. Such information has been gathered through the delivery of awareness sessions and other interactions with members of the public and equality groups that are less likely to take up screening:

- People who are Black, Asian or from other minority ethnic groups
- People with a disability
- People with poor mental health
- People who are Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transgender
- People who live in deprived areas



Introduction

This report is,

- Split into the different NHS cancer screening programmes
- Identifies the barriers cited by different groups
- Describes and suggests the approaches that could remove such barriers.



NHS Cervical screening programme



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Booking an appointment /Non-attendance	Anyone with a cervix.	<p>AC trained volunteers to ring non-attendees, discuss their reasons and book them straight into appointments. 'Additionally, the following improvements were trialled to further increase screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative option for booking screening on a Practice telephone system• Option to book screening online• Introduction of weekend appointments• When possible, GP practice to use enhanced access to provide more screening appointment slots.• Introduced multiple appointments for female members of one family. This was successfully trialled with a PCN in Oldham and also resolved childcare issues and screening anxiety• Cervical screening 'drop-in' sessions were trialled in Bolton resulting in increased uptake of screening.'

NHS Cervical screening programme



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Booking an appointment /Non-attendance	Anyone with a cervix.	Development of the Bee Seen Get Screened pledge in 2022 to get employers to allow paid time off work to attend screening appointments. The pledge now covers >47,000 employees across GM and is rising all the time.
Fear/Trauma/Judgement	Anyone with a cervix.	Cancer screening awareness sessions to reinforce the message that screening is not a test for cancer but to identify changes in the cervix to provide earlier diagnosis.
Fear/Trauma/Judgement	Women who have experienced FGM.	Funded NESTAC to engage and raise awareness with women who have experienced FGM. This resulted in, <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training community champions• Set up a buddy scheme to accompany women to screening• Identified and linked women to specialist support at MRI FGM service.

NHS Cervical screening programme



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Fear/Trauma/Judgement	Anyone with a cervix.	Collaboration with the ACES study by the University of Manchester to see if urine sample detection of HPV is as reliable as cervical screening.
Religious/cultural beliefs	Some Muslim and Jewish women	Time is allocated in cancer screening awareness session to discuss myths eg: If not in a marriage they don't see the need as they are not having sex and fear of screening breaking the hymen.
Lack of awareness by health professionals of issues impacting transgender people	Trans/non binary/non gender conforming people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosted events to discuss the importance of cancer screening for Trans & non-binary people • Developed YouTube videos about barriers to screening • Developed a project to raise awareness of the importance of screening • Raised awareness amongst trans people to discuss cervical screening with their GP • Contributed to a national guidance booklet for cancer risk and screening information for people who are transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse

NHS Cervical screening programme



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Painful experience	Anyone with a cervix.	<p>During awareness sessions women are informed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the clinician's judgement is used to determine the size of speculum used. Speculums are now made from plastic and feel and look less clinical Cervical screening tips are given to make the experience more comfortable
Older women being discouraged from screening	Older women/anyone with a cervix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening awareness sessions explain the low risk for over 65s with a negative HPV test, and the higher risk for women who rarely attend for screening. Cervical screening tips are given to women and promoted during cervical screening week
Circulation of horror stories from friends/family members	Anyone with a cervix.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive experiences of screening are shared during cancer screening awareness sessions. Tips for a better cervical screening experience are shared during cervical screening awareness week and awareness sessions includes myth busting .

NHS Cervical screening programme



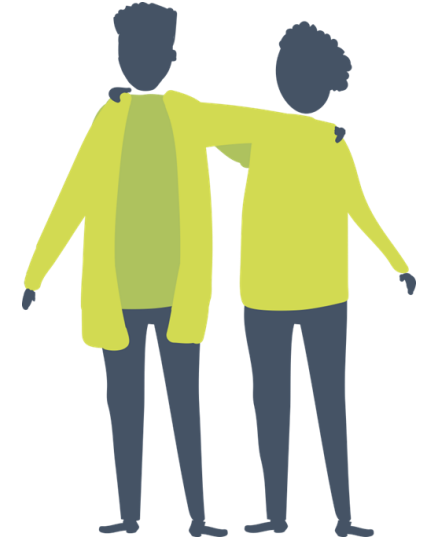
Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Younger people may not see the relevance of screening	Younger people with a cervix	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funded Girl Gang Manchester to run a campaign targeted at younger women• Engagement with younger women in priority areas• Information provided about the risks of HPV, how it can be transmitted and the HPV vaccine.
Lack of offer of screening to Lesbian women	Lesbian women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answer Cancer YouTube videos aimed at lesbian women• Targeted events for lesbian women.• Hints and tips to make cervical testing more comfortable.• Information is provided about the risks of HPV and skin to skin transmission.
Poor practice / negative attitudes of health care professionals	Anyone with a cervix	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cancer screening awareness sessions explain why screening is important,• Service user suggestion - NHS to review training provided by staff who offer screening services

NHS Breast screening programme



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Lack of understanding of screening letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with learning disabilities • People unable to read English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user suggestion - NHS to review screening letters to ensure content complies with Accessible Information standard and meets the needs of people whose first language is not English.
Lack of understanding of screening	People with learning disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded VCSE organisation called PossAbilities to produce 'easy read cancer screening guide. • PossAbilities also arranged for a visit by individuals with a learning disability to see the equipment used for breast screening. • Use of visual props to explain screening.
Poor practice / negative attitudes of professionals	All women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service user suggestion - NHS to review training for staff including communication skills • Screening awareness sessions provide attendees with facts and information.

NHS Bowel screening programme



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Lack of awareness of the FIT test	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Materials were produced alongside the national Bowel Cancer Awareness campaigns• The Bee Seen Get Screened pledge (BSGS) asks employers to sign up to raise awareness of the FIT test within their workplace• A series of videos were produced and put on the Answer Cancer YouTube channel raising awareness
Support required to take sample	Physically disabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakthrough UK report led to production of Accessibility Guide.
Testing is unhygienic	All groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Screening awareness sessions provide information on the NHS shift to FIT tests which helps in taking a sample and negates the need for home storage.

All screening programmes



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Fear of talking about cancer	Different ethnic/religious groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grants programme enables VCSE reach into different groups/communities and the Engagement Team go into community spaces to start and normalise conversations.• Recruitment of cancer champions from communities to talk about their lived experience to encourage conversations.
Mental Capacity.	People with a learning disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Created accessible awareness presentations with support from disability organisation (United Response).• Funded community groups to develop resources and promotional videos for our use.• Service user suggestion - NHS to consider 'reasonable adjustment' to accommodate people with learning disabilities accessing healthcare setting and acknowledge their communication needs/requirements on their hospital passport

All screening programmes



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Language	Older Minority groups: Chinese, South Asian, Eastern European Refugees/Asylum seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruited individuals with range of languages skills• Deliver awareness sessions in different languages• Recruited champions from different communities with language skills• Spot purchased community organisations to support Answer Cancer activity to engage with particular racial groups• The Answer Cancer YouTube channel has screening videos in community languages.
Lack of appropriate methods of communication	Deaf people and people with hearing loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivered awareness sessions in British Sign language or Sign Supported English (Manchester Deaf Centre)• Options explored for delivery of cervical screening sessions with signers present for deaf people.

All screening programmes



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Poor access to screening services	Physically disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answer Cancer and Breakthrough UK produced a report in 2020 which highlighted some of the multiple barriers faced by disabled people.• Partnered with disability charity Breakthrough UK to produce a short video about the barriers to cancer screening that disabled people face and how these could be tackled..
Transport	Physically disabled people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service user suggestion - NHS to consider transport needs of disabled people to enable access to screening and putting 'reasonable adjustments' in place
Poor Mental Health	People with poor mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeted work with people with poor mental health at engagement events and screening awareness training to encourage uptake.

All screening programmes



Barrier to Access	Group affected	AC-led Intervention or proposal
Past bad experience.	Anyone who has had a previous negative experience in and NHS setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The community engagement team talk to people about other options for accessing screening and health care through clinics etc and can encourage people to try to rebuild trust. Factual information and myth busting help with this.
Fear of a cancer diagnosis	All groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Screening awareness sessions focus on information and facts to replace fear and encourage take up of screening• Emphasis is put on the progress made in cancer treatment and survival rates over recent years.• Training and awareness raising includes myth busting to reduce the fear of diagnosis and treatment and put cancer incidence rates, age profiles etc into wider context.

Conclusion

There are many barriers to screening faced by people and these barriers can be the same across all the screening programmes.

Working with communities to bust the myths and encourage screening goes a long way to increase the uptake of the NHS cancer screening programmes

