

Increasing cancer screening uptake in partnership with employers

100+ organisations across Greater Manchester have taken the Bee Seen Get Screened pledge, providing 80,000 staff guaranteed time off to attend cancer screening appointments.



Background 1

“Only 1 in 5 full-time workers were able to get a convenient cervical screening appointment last time they tried to book.”

Jo’s Cervical Cancer Trust

Greater Manchester has some of the lowest cancer screening rates in the UK. This results in high levels of late diagnoses and unnecessary deaths from cancer.

Busy lives and difficulty arranging time off during work hours was reported to Answer Cancer as the most frequent barrier to attending cancer screening appointments.

Our aim 2

Make it possible for people to attend appointments during working hours to increase screening uptake and talk about cancer in the workplace

The Answer Cancer team identified an opportunity to develop partnerships with employers across Greater Manchester to adopt a new health and wellbeing policy to enable employees to attend cancer screening appointments during working hours.

The Bee Seen Get Screened workplace pledge asked employers to:

- Guarantee their staff paid time off or provide flexible working to attend NHS cancer screening appointments.
- Raise the profile of health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- Encourage staff to talk about cancer and the importance of screening.

“Sorry if I’m over-sharing but... I’m off to have my smear in 10 minutes. Knowing I am able to take time off during the day to attend my appointment has made it completely different this time. I love the pledge. I hope other organisations sign up too.”

Employee testimonial

Our approach 3

1. Outreach beyond the health sector

Focused outreach to HR & Wellbeing officers or individuals who have been personally affected by cancer within private, public sector and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations. They are all invited to pledge and join the network.

2. A pledge to shift workplace policy

Employers agree to implement time-off or flexible working to facilitate employees to attend screening appointments.

3. Workplace training and resources to empower employers

Employers book a one-hour workshop, delivered by Answer Cancer, and access our employer toolkit to raise awareness of cancer symptoms and screening.

4. Process to book time-off implemented

Employees are able to organise time off to attend screening appointments during workplace hours.

Impact & outcomes so far 4

100 + organisations across Greater Manchester have already pledged, giving 80,000 employees time off or flexible working, to attend essential Cancer Screening Appointments.

- Increasing uptake of cancer screening: one organisation reported a 40% take-up in booking cancer screening appointments, seeking advice about screening or signs and symptoms and talking about screening with friends and family since signing up to the pledge.
- Changing workplace behaviour and culture: emphasising prevention rather than acute treatment via prioritising health & wellbeing in the workplace.
- Early detection has economic benefits: if cancer is detected and treated earlier, less invasive procedures and a higher rate of recovery, lead to reduced time taken as sick leave.

Case study 1: Salford City College

Salford City College signed up to the Bee Seen Get Screened employer pledge in April 2023. They already provided staff up to 5 days off a year to attend hospital appointments. They built on this wellbeing policy to proactively raise awareness of the importance of regular cancer screenings and encourage staff to take time off to attend their appointments.

Following the Bee Seen Get Screened Cancer Screening Awareness webinar, one male member of staff recognised a symptom of breast cancer and went to get screened. As a result, he received a cancer diagnosis and is now having treatment.

Case study 2: Unexpected benefits of Bee Seen Get Screened

- Some GP practice groups are providing smear tests for staff at different practices across PCN’s to reduce the time required to attend and ensure there is easy access for all.
- Some hospitals are providing on site screening for staff to address the barriers of travel and tackling the reluctance to ask for time off due to work pressures.



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Some of our partners

