

Tackling health inequalities and increasing early detection

What we do

Answer Cancer trialled and successfully rolled out its Primary Care Network (PCN) partnership project where multilingual trained female volunteer Cancer Champions rang women registered with a GP surgery who had not attended for cervical screening to discuss the reasons for their non-attendance and book a new appointment.

The partnership project **successfully increased the uptake of cervical screening in GP practices in Manchester, Oldham, and Salford.**

Increasing uptake in cancer screening by...

- Quickly following up “did not attend” (DNAs) and making 3 calls to attempt contact.
- Explaining the importance of screening to reduce stigma and dispel myths.
- Using multilingual cancer champions, to accommodate different language needs.
- Clear communication and callers adopting a positive attitude to tackle concerns and overcome previous negative experiences.

Tackling barriers to cervical screening

What we found

- Inability to get paid time off work.
- Previous poor or painful experience.
- Myths linked to religious/cultural beliefs.
- Some GP practice staff lack of understanding of additional needs of trans and non-binary individuals.
- Fear of receiving bad news
- Inconvenient times for screening.
- Physical disability preventing access.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Lack of understanding about the screening process, sometimes due to learning disability.

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How we dealt with it

- Working with GPs and our cancer champions
- Introduced good practice with GP surgeries e.g. recommended introduction of direct line/telephone options for booking screening appointments.
- One to one engagement with people to overcome barriers to screening. National research recognizes the success of this approach, developing on ‘One Minute Campaign’ led by Trafford MBC (2016)
- GP practice to use enhanced access to provide more screening appointment slots. e.g. The introduction of weekend and evening appointments
- Group appointments for female members of one family. This was successfully trialled with a PCN in Oldham and was seen to resolve childcare issues and screening anxiety.
- Cervical screening ‘drop-in’ sessions were trialled in Bolton.

What we have achieved

- Tackling inequity in cervical screening by encouraging those least likely to attend to take up their appointments.
- Dramatically increasing cervical screening uptake in the GP practices involved
- GP practices have adapted their approaches to ensure that they are following up DNAs on the same day and have been making more telephone calls for bookings instead of relying on text messages.
- They have recognised the benefits of holding dedicated smear clinics.