



Public Health  
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To:  
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Local Authority CEs  
NHS England Regional  
Directors  
PHE Regional Directors  
PHE Centre Directors

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Dear Colleague

### **National Cervical Screening Campaign: launching March 2019**

The NHS Cervical Screening Programme has made a significant impact on cervical cancer mortality since it was established in 1988, saving an estimated 5,000 lives a year. However, coverage is at a 20-year low and the programme is not meeting its 80% coverage standard. Figures published by NHS Digital show that at 31 March 2018, the percentage of eligible women (aged 25 – 64) screened adequately was 71.4% this compares with 72% at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

To help address this issue PHE, NHSE and DHSC colleagues held a spotlight meeting and agreed that a national campaign to raise awareness would be a useful part of a package of measures to address coverage in the programme. Therefore, on **5 March 2019** Public Health England (PHE), with support from NHS England, will launch its first national multimedia cervical screening campaign. The campaign will highlight the risks of cervical cancer and preventative benefits of screening,

encouraging women of all ages to respond to their letter and if they have missed previous invites, to book a screening appointment. As well as aiming to improve understanding and informed uptake of cervical screening across England, we hope the campaign will contribute to the prevention of cervical cancer.

As part of the campaign development process, the PHE screening team has been working with counterparts in NHS England and the PHE Marketing team. In collaboration with charities and academics in the field of cervical screening, PHE marketing has been reviewing coverage data to determine which sections of the screening population to prioritise and explore barriers to screening. The team has also been conducting research with the target audiences to understand the best approach to help women understand and feel able to access the programme if they wish.

As this is a new national campaign, we do not know for certain what level of response the campaign will generate. However, we do know that cervical screening uptake increased following the death of Jade Goody in 2009. Available data suggests that the impact of Jade Goody's death caused an extra 478,000 samples to be reported by the programme, for women aged 25 to 64. Looking at this impact, we estimate that the new cervical screening campaign could generate an uplift of between 10% and 30% of the Jade Goody impact. This would equate to an extra 50,000 to 143,000 additional tests nationally. At a GP practice level this would mean between 1 and 3 extra samples every two months. We request that CCGs work with their GP practices and screening centres to ensure there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the increase in volume anticipated.

The campaign provides an excellent opportunity to improve women's understanding of cervical screening and have a longer-term impact on the number of women who choose to take up the offer.

Please inform your colleagues of this new development and share this letter. Alternatively, there is text below for you to use in shorter network bulletins. We also have information and resources on the [campaign page on the PHE Campaign Resource Centre](#) including posters, wallet cards, briefing sheets and a video, they can be ordered or downloaded for use in local settings.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Anne Mackie  
Director of Screening  
Public Health England



Cally Palmer  
National Cancer Director  
NHS England

Professor Anne Mackie, PHE Director of Screening said:

“This new campaign will play a vital role in raising awareness of cervical screening, as it’s a real concern that fewer women, particularly younger women, are choosing to take screening up. We know that for some women worries about embarrassment or discomfort can put them off taking the test, so we hope the campaign will make it clearer to them about what the test involves so they can decide if it’s right for them.”

Cally Palmer, NHS England National Cancer Director said:

“From March 2019, Public Health England will be running a campaign to highlight the importance of cervical screening. The campaign will encourage women who receive their screening letter and those who have not responded in the past to book a screening appointment. NHS England has been working in partnership with PHE colleagues on the campaign. We hope that by working together, we will be able to help more women overcome some of the fears and practical barriers that they experience when it comes to cervical screening. I encourage all my colleagues across the country to spread the word about the forthcoming campaign and to prepare for a possible increase in the demand on services. It is important to consider the full patient pathway, from the test that is performed in primary care, through to cytology, colposcopy and treatment.”

### **Campaign copy for bulletins**

On 5 March 2019 Public Health England will launch a new national campaign to help increase participation in the National Cervical Screening Programme. Cervical screening is estimated to save 5,000 lives a year and yet coverage is at a 20-year low. Further information and resources visit the [PHE Campaign Resource Centre](#).