Bowel Cancer screening campaign: Briefing for GPs

Campaign dates: 24th August 2015 to 3rd April 2016

Cancer Research UK will be delivering an advertising campaign that aims to raise awareness of the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (benefits/eligibility) in 7 regions of England, from 24th August 2015 to end-March 2016. Direct mail is also planned to run alongside advertising, from January to March 16, in selected areas (areas currently TBC). This campaign is based on a successful pilot that ran in London in 2014 by Cancer Research UK, and is supported by Public Health England and Department of Health.

Why are you running this campaign?
To increase participation of 60 – 74 year olds in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening programme, by raising awareness of the eligible age range and the benefits of bowel cancer screening, and addressing psychosocial barriers to participation (via direct mail activity). Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK, yet it is estimated the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening programme can cut deaths from the disease by 15% in the target population. By 2025 it is predicted that FOBT will save over 2,000 lives from bowel cancer each year in the UK. If carried out correctly, the FOBT can detect early signs of bowel cancer, when it is often easier to treat successfully. However, overall uptake of the test in England is low at 58% (2012-13), and as low as 42% in some areas. This campaign forms part of Cancer Research UK’s ongoing efforts to beat cancer sooner.

What activity will be taking place and when?
The advertising will consist of posters in bus shelters; posters on telephone kiosks; posters inside and on the outside of buses; adverts on pharmacy bags and regional press articles. To reach as many of the eligible population as possible we’re taking a long-term approach and running advertising in a series of bursts between August 15 and March 16:

- **Burst one**: 24th August to 27th September
- **Burst two**: 5th October to 8th November
- **Burst three**: 18th January to 21st February
- **Burst four**: 7th March to 3rd April

During the above dates, advertising will run across all of the following areas:
1. **Lancashire** (Blackpool and West Lancashire CCGs)
2. **Merseyside** (Knowsley, Liverpool, South Sefton, Halton and St Helens CCGs)
3. **Greater Manchester** (all 12 CCGs)
4. **Yorkshire** (Bradford City, Bradford Districts & Hull CCGs)
5. **North East** (Newcastle West, Newcastle North and East and South Tees CCGs)
6. **Leicester** (Leicester City CCG)
7. **South** (Oxfordshire, South Reading & Slough CCGs)

Direct mail (consisting of a letter communication and provision of a ‘kit enhancement pack’, containing latex free gloves and possibly a poo catcher) will run alongside the advertising in a selection of the target areas from January to March 2016. Target areas are TBC until results from a pilot in Wales are finalised (due Sep 15).

Who is the campaign aimed at?
Men and women who are eligible to participate in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme, i.e. those aged 60 to 74, regardless of whether they are symptomatic or not.

What evidence is there to support this approach?
- **Advertising**: Evidence indicates that poor knowledge of the benefits and eligibility of the NHS bowel cancer screening programme and being asymptomatic, are contributing factors to poor uptake, resulting in people

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2. {HYPERLINK "http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=Predicting%20the%20impact%20of%20the%20screening%20programme%20on%20colorectal%20cancer%20in%20the%20UK"}
3. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140401/text/140401w0001.htm#140402600019
making an uninformed choice not to participate. Evidence suggests that during the London pilot, the kit enhancement pack and endorsement letter achieved a greater impact when supported with advertising. In North East London, a pre and post on-street survey found those who recognised the campaign posters were more likely to understand the purpose of bowel screening, have higher intentions to complete the test and believe it would be less disgusting and easy to complete6.

- **Kit enhancement packs**: ‘Unpleasantness’ is a significant barrier for many considering completing an FOBT kit2,6,7. With this in mind, kit enhancement packs were developed to help people collect their stool sample. We regularly review the growing evidence base of research, campaigns and localised interventions aimed at increasing uptake of bowel cancer screening, along with closely monitoring broader early diagnosis work aimed at improving the early detection of bowel cancer.

**Who will fund this activity?**
Cancer Research UK will fund the advertising and direct mail activity, and will lead on all planning and delivery.

**Have Public Health England and the National Screening Office been informed about this activity?**
Yes. Public Health England, the Department of Health and the National Screening Office have been fully informed about this activity.

**What impact is the campaign likely to have on GPs?**
Very little, if any. The campaign will not direct patients to their GP. The call to action featured on the campaign posters advises people to contact Cancer Research UK’s Nurse Helpline for more information. However, patients may mention the campaign to you as the posters could prompt people to ask questions about bowel cancer screening. Please acknowledge your awareness of the campaign and further encourage participation in the programme. Your support is highly valued, as your validation of the campaign key messages could help to positively influence a person’s decision to participate in bowel cancer screening.

**What impact is the campaign likely to have on the NHS screening centres and hubs?**
Advertising and direct mail activity was first piloted in London (Feb – Mar 2014). Based on results from that pilot, it is estimated that if a sample of 5,000 people in London were sent bowel cancer screening kits during the pilot*;

- An extra 73 would be adequately screened if they had received a CRUK endorsement flyer and seen the advertising, with an additional 2 colonoscopies.
- An extra 325 would be adequately screened if they had received the CRUK endorsement flyer, seen the advertising and received a kit enhancement pack (poo catcher & gloves), with an additional 9 colonoscopies.

*These estimates assume that two thirds of the people invited were 60-69 years old, and a third were 70-74. 5,000 is a hypothetical sample size. It is assumed the colonoscopies would be delivered over the length of time it takes to invite 5000 people.

**How can GPs support the campaign?**

1. **Share this briefing with colleagues**
2. **Please support the campaign by acknowledging your awareness of it** when it is mentioned by your patients, and further encourage completion of the test kit. Your endorsement of the campaign could nudge a person closer towards making a decision to participate in the programme.
3. **Make use of the campaign resources available:**
   - **Download print-ready campaign posters** and display them in your GP Practice
     - [HYPERLINK](http://publications.cancerresearchuk.org/cancertype/bowel/screening_asian_couple_A4_poster_.html)
     - [HYPERLINK](http://publications.cancerresearchuk.org/cancertype/bowel/bowel_screening_male_A4.html)
     - [HYPERLINK](http://publications.cancerresearchuk.org/cancertype/bowel/Bowel_screening_couple_A4.html)
   - **Distribute business card sized information cards** to patients following your brief interventions with them about bowel cancer screening. These will be made available to GP practices working in the areas where advertising will be running once they are available (like to be Sep/Oct).

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