Wales Bowel Cancer Screening campaign
Monday 5 February – Saturday 31 March 2018

A Be Clear on Cancer branded campaign will launch across Wales in early 2018, aimed at increasing participation of 60–74 year olds in the NHS Wales Bowel Cancer Screening Programme

Why the focus on bowel cancer screening?
Bowel cancer is the fourth most common cancer and the second most common cause of cancer death in the UK, yet trials show that bowel cancer screening can cut deaths from the disease by 25% in those screened (60–74 year olds). The guaiac faecal occult blood test or gFOBT (see image 1) is currently used for bowel cancer screening in Wales. It can detect early signs of bowel cancer, when it is often easier to treat. Despite this, overall uptake of bowel cancer screening in Wales is low at 54.4% (2015/16), and as low as 37.9% amongst some of the most deprived groups.

What is this campaign aiming to achieve?
Increased awareness and participation in the NHS Wales Bowel Screening Programme (specifically, gFOBT).

Has this campaign run previously?
Yes, a Be Clear on Cancer bowel cancer screening awareness campaign ran in the North West of England in Jan-Feb 2017, but never before in Wales. Cancer Research UK (CRUK) has also undertaken three other bowel cancer screening pilot campaigns to date, in London (2014), Wales (2015) and England (2015–16). Insights gained from these previous campaigns have been used to inform this campaign.

Is there any evidence this campaign will work?
Evidence indicates fear of the test outcome, being asymptomatic, having a low perceived risk of bowel cancer and concerns about the practicalities and cleanliness of the screening test can act as barriers to participation. CRUK’s previous pilots all aimed to explore ways of improving participation of 60–74 year olds in the Bowel Screening Programme.
In London, a pack (containing gloves & poo catchers) and endorsement flyer achieved a greater impact when supported with advertising, increasing uptake by 6.1 percentage points among 60–69 year olds, and 7.3 percentage points among 70–74 year olds.
In Wales, a personalised CRUK endorsement letter was found to be most effective among ‘First Timers’ (+9.1 percentage points), while a letter + pack (containing latex-free gloves) was most impactful among more deprived ‘Non-Responders’ (+3.2 percentage points).
In the North West England, interim evaluation results showed that use of the Be Clear on Cancer brand and TV was successful - advertising increased uptake across all screening history groups by 2 – 4 percentage points, with indications of a larger impact among more deprived ‘first timers’ and ‘previous non-responders’, than among less deprived (which is encouraging since when someone participates once, they are more likely to do so again in future and previous non-responders are hardest to engage).

Who is running this campaign?
CRUK will lead, fund and evaluate this campaign. Bowel Screening Wales, Public Health Wales (PHW) and NHS Wales colleagues will provide consultancy, support with engagement of stakeholders, and lead on the analysis of uptake data.
Why is the campaign Be Clear on Cancer branded?
In Feb 2017 CRUK, supported by Public Health England, Department of Health and NHS England, trialled the use Be Clear on Cancer branding on a bowel cancer screening awareness campaign in North West England. Interim evaluation results showed that use of the Be Clear on Cancer brand and TV was successful - increasing uptake across all screening history groups by 2 – 4 percentage points so we will be reusing many of the materials.

Given the encouraging results of this trial, and the use of Be Clear on Cancer branding in a Welsh Lung Cancer Awareness campaign in July 2016, it makes sense to build on the assets we already have, rather than starting from scratch.

Who is the campaign aimed at?
People eligible for gFOBT bowel cancer screening (60–74 year olds). The advertising will be targeted to lower socioeconomic groups, and skewed towards reaching men as:

- bowel cancer is more common among most deprived men
- males are more likely than females to die from the disease
- men aged 60–69 are less likely to participate in the NHS Wales Bowel Cancer Screening programme (gFOBT, specifically) than females of the same age.

What activities will be taking place and when?
An advertising campaign including TV, adverts in newspapers and on Facebook will run for 8 weeks from 5 February to 31 March 2018. Advertising will run on these channels across Wales throughout the campaign period.

What are the main messages of the campaign?
- This little kit could save your life
- If you’re aged 60–74 you’ll be sent a free bowel cancer screening kit in the post, once every two years
- It’s meant for people with no symptoms
- It’s one of the best ways to find bowel cancer early, when it’s easier to treat successfully
- So don’t ignore it, take the test
- Be Clear on Cancer

What impact is the campaign likely to have on NHS services?
Should the campaign achieve a 5% increase in uptake amongst all screening history groups, across Wales there would be an estimated:

- Additional 1,200 additional people screened* per month**
- Additional 15 colonoscopies per month***

Modelling data relevant to each Health Board has been calculated to help them to prepare as best they can for the anticipated increase in demand for diagnostic services.

* Participants returning a used test kit within six months following their invitation
** Estimates have been calculated using the number of invitations sent to the eligible population in each Health Board 2015/16 and percentage uptake by screening history for Wales. Cancer Research UK calculated the estimated potential increase in the number of people screened and number of colonoscopies, should the campaign achieve a 5 percentage point increase in uptake amongst all screening history groups, or a 7 percentage point increase amongst first-timers and previous non-responders, and a 5 percentage point increase in previously screened.
*** Number of colonoscopies was estimated using the positivity rate (1.3%) from all bowel screening kits achieving a definitive result, and the percentage attending colonoscopy in each Health Board.

We do not anticipate a significant increase in GP practice visits as a result of this campaign, since the advertising will not be directing people to their GP. However, we will be engaging GPs with the campaign so that they are prepared for any questions patients might have, are able to help patients make an informed decision about bowel screening, and where possible, increase uptake in their area using the newly available non-responder data. We do advise that practice teams are aware of the campaign and can answer related patient queries.

How will the campaign be evaluated?
Bowel cancer screening uptake will be analysed by screening history, gender and deprivation and compared to those invited in a pre-campaign control period. The impact of advertising on awareness, knowledge and attitudes will also be measured with pre and post surveys, and we hope to analyse some outcomes data, e.g. estimated number of bowel cancers diagnosed.

What can I do to support the campaign?

1. Share this briefing with NHS Wales, Public Health Wales and Local Authority (Public Health) colleagues who will find it useful to hear about the campaign.

2. Display campaign posters and leaflets in community settings (e.g. GP practice, Pharmacist, Community Centre).

3. Visit the CRUK website for further information and to access briefings and campaign materials.

Further information:
1 Engaging primary care in bowel cancer screening: GP good practice guide (available from CRUK website from January 2018)

4 Wales bowel screening data for FY 15/16 - 54.4% uptake amongst participants invited between April 2015 and March 2016. 37.9% uptake amongst Q5 Deprivation Quintile in Cardiff and Vale UHB. Bowel Screening Wales Annual Statistical Report 2015/16 http://www.bowelscreening.wales.nhs.uk/openpdf/301909
6 Cancer Research UK,