To:
Clinical Commissioning Group Clinical Leads
Strategic Clinical Network Associate Directors
Local Authority Chief Executives
Directors of Public Health
Foundation Trust Chief Executives and Medical Directors
Trust Chief Executives and Medical Directors
Screening and Immunisation Leads
Bowel Cancer Screening Hub Director (Midlands and North West Hub)
Bowel Cancer Screening Programme Manager (Midlands and North West Hub)

CC:
NHS England Regional Medical Director
Clinical Commissioning Group Accountable Officers
Directors of Commissioning Operations
QA Lead for the North of England
Morfydd Williams, NHS England
Iain Hill, NHS England

Address all of the above to North West contacts only

RE: Forthcoming Be Clear on Cancer regional Bowel Cancer Screening awareness campaign, North West England, 9th January to 2nd April 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

I am very pleased to announce that Cancer Research UK will be funding a regional Be Clear on Cancer Bowel Cancer Screening awareness pilot in early 2017. This will consist of advertising (including TV) running from 9th January to 2nd April 2017, and direct mail running from 20th February to 31st March 2017. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme (guaiac Faecal Occult Blood Test or gFOBT), encourage more people to participate in bowel cancer screening and, therefore, improve early diagnosis of bowel cancer.

The advertising campaign will be delivered by Cancer Research UK, and is being developed in close partnership with the national Be Clear on Cancer campaign team, including Public Health England (marketing), NHS England and Department of Health colleagues. This is to ensure that the campaign benefits from the wealth of insight held by the team, and to run and evaluate this pilot in a way that is in keeping with previous Be Clear on Cancer campaigns. The North West has been selected as a target area based on a number of considerations, including: low bowel cancer screening uptake levels; high density of target audience (i.e. 60–74 year olds, low socioeconomic group); high incidence of, and mortality from, bowel cancer; and local support for the campaign aims.

This campaign will be built on learnings from three previous bowel cancer screening projects commissioned by Cancer Research UK, along with insights from multiple Be Clear on Cancer campaigns that have been piloted locally and regionally, before being rolled out nationally (where evidence supported it). Be Clear on Cancer has historically focused on symptom awareness, but there has been a long-standing interest in testing the successful Be Clear on Cancer brand with bowel cancer screening messages. Dr Anne Mackie, Director of Screening, Public Health England, has endorsed the campaign: “The bowel cancer screening landscape has evolved in recent years and
the future will see more promising changes implemented across the country. However, it is important that we raise awareness of the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme and highlight that screening is a choice. Screening gives those who participate, and who are unknowingly living with the earliest signs of bowel cancer, the best chance of successful treatment.”

However, we recognise that this campaign may increase demand for NHS services, many of which are struggling. The Independent Cancer Taskforce identified gaps in the endoscopy workforce and made a number of recommendations aimed at boosting diagnostic capacity. Cancer Research UK is continuing to monitor and influence the delivery of these recommendations.

We will support screening centres by helping them to prepare for the anticipated impact of the campaign, including sharing best practice for managing increases in demand for services and provision of modelling data for each screening centre. The modelling data will be our best estimate based on available data, however I urge you to be mindful of your own insights regarding your local screening populations, and note that as with any pilot, there are some unknowns. We have not used TV as part of a Bowel Cancer Screening awareness campaign previously, and this will be the first time we will combine our most effective direct mail (to First-Timers and Non-Responders only) with advertising. We value your feedback, therefore please do keep your Screening and Immunisation team informed of any capacity concerns at screening centres ahead of the campaign live dates. The Cancer Research UK Health Marketing team will be liaising with them closely to monitor this.

Please take the time to read the ‘Campaign Overview’ briefing document attached as it provides details of campaign plans, explains the evidence that will help to inform the upcoming activity, and outlines the engagement work currently underway to prepare for the impact of the campaign on local services. I encourage you to share this information with colleagues and local teams to enable them to put plans in place to help promote the campaign locally, and ensure that services are ready to respond. Further briefings outlining how GP practices can lend support, and how screening centres can prepare for the campaign will be disseminated ahead of the campaign launch date.

Should results from this pilot be promising, our long-term aim is for the advertising to be incorporated into Public Health England’s Be Clear on Cancer programme, and to explore how the direct mail could potentially be integrated into the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme, so that more people benefit from an earlier bowel cancer diagnosis.

Finally, I thank you in advance for your support of this upcoming Be Clear on Cancer regional pilot campaign. Back in summer 2015, I had the honour of sitting on the Independent Cancer Taskforce and contributing to the development of the new cancer strategy: ‘Achieving World Class Outcomes: A Strategy for England 2015 to 2020’. Within that, a recommendation was made to Public Health England to “explore the use of the ‘Be Clear on Cancer’ brand to improve uptake of screening programmes, particularly among disadvantaged groups”. It is very encouraging to see Cancer Research UK, Public Health England, the Department of Health and NHS England working together to put this recommendation into action.

Yours Sincerely

Sarah Woolnough
Executive Director of Policy and Information,
Cancer Research UK
Commentary from other colleagues in the North West:
“It’s fantastic to see a Be Clear on Cancer Bowel Cancer Screening awareness campaign being tested across the North West of England. Participation in bowel cancer screening is among the poorest in the country in some parts of the region. The three screening leads in the North West – myself, Dr Graham Wardman and Christine Khiroya – all welcome these approaches to improving participation in bowel cancer screening by national bodies such as Cancer Research UK and Public Health England, to support our local efforts to improve uptake.” Dr Dan Seddon, Screening and Immunisation Lead, Cheshire and Merseyside

“I am delighted that the North West has been chosen to run this Bowel Cancer Screening awareness pilot. Be Clear on Cancer is already seeing great gains in terms of raising awareness of symptoms of cancer and it will be interesting to see if we can replicate that success for screening too. Some teams may find the increase in the demand for services a challenge, especially when capacity planning may already be tough. But, we need to act now; we cannot let our poor survival rates for bowel cancer continue. So I would encourage you to support the campaign, work with colleagues and plan for what we hope will be a successful addition to the Be Clear on Cancer programme of work.” Chris Harrison, National Clinical Director for Cancer