



Media Release

15 June 2020

Cervical Screening Awareness Week

15th – 21st June 2020

Monday 15th June – Sunday 21st June is dedicated to the prevention of cervical cancer and the importance of taking up screening invitations. Led by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, the week aims to raise awareness of cervical cancer, stress the importance of screening and reduce the impact for everyone affected by cervical cell abnormalities and cervical cancer.

Analysis of data indicates that a number of women will have missed or will receive a delayed screening invitation during the Covid-19 pandemic. In Leeds we are aware there will be challenges to address this back-log but we are well-equipped to get all women back into screening as swiftly and safely as possible.

Dr Sarah Forbes, Associate Medical Director of Leeds NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and Co-Chair of Leeds Cancer Programme said:

“In Leeds we are aware of the need to swiftly and safely re-introduce women to cervical screening and we are working with partners across the city to ensure there is capacity and systems in place to be able to respond to the increased demand. Screening is important for the earliest detection of abnormal cells so we urge all women to book their screening appointment when they receive their invitation.”

City-wide partners from the health and care system in Leeds have established a cancer screening group to co-ordinate the resumption of cervical screening. This includes:

- ensuring that local services and programmes are strengthened to meet the demand and target areas of highest need;
- ensuring there is capacity within General Practices to deal with the demand;

- exploring potential development of new delivery models within primary care , for example, local level screening hubs;
- raising awareness of the importance of cervical screening and that it is safe to seek advice from you doctor with any concerning symptoms.

Women in Leeds experiencing discomfort or symptoms should seek urgent advice from their doctor's surgery or call 111. Signs and symptoms of cervical cancer include abnormal bleeding during sex, between periods or after the menopause, as well as discomfort during sex, back pain and unusual cervical dischargeⁱ. Residents of Leeds who are currently 'shielding' should seek advice from their healthcare provider on the benefits of being screened.

In Leeds there are a number of initiatives aiming to increase screening rates in Leeds, particularly in areas with low uptake. These include:

General Practice Screening Champions: Forty-eight GP practices in Leeds's most deprived areas have identified a staff member to take on the role of 'Cervical Screening Champion'. Champions have attended quarterly workshops which provided education and peer group support to help increase knowledge and confidence to be able to promote cervical screening and help remove barriers to attending.

Cancer Wise Leeds: Funding from Yorkshire Cancer Research is enabling a city-wide infrastructure to be put in place to ensure that people who do not take up their screening invitation for breast, bowel and cervical cancers are identified and followed-up to support and encourage attendance.

Leeds Cancer Awareness: Leeds Cancer Awareness aims to reduce inequalities in cancer by increasing screening awareness and uptake through outreach in areas or communities with poorer cancer outcomes. Activities include advice sessions at community groups or events.

ENDS #NHSHereforYou

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Leeds Cancer Programme is a partnership between Macmillan Cancer Support, the NHS in Leeds and Leeds City Council to transform cancer services across the city. Through its dynamic and ambitious strategy, it is committed to delivering the best outcomes for all in Leeds through world class cancer services shaped by patients, carers and the wider public.

ⁱ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer/symptoms/>