

WI research on attitudes towards strategies that can improve uptake of cervical screening

Overview

Between August and October 2020, the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) carried out a survey to understand attitudes towards cervical screening and sampling methods in England and Wales. All women and people with a cervix aged 25 and over were invited to take part. There was no upper age limit.

This briefing focusses on the findings of one strand of this research, attitudes towards certain strategies that can improve uptake of cervical screening. You can find out more about the other themes identified in our research [here](#).

This research was part of an ongoing WI project on cervical screening – our 5 Minutes that Matter campaign which seeks to raise awareness of the importance of attending routine cervical screenings, and support more women to make an informed decision about whether or not to take up their invitations.

Key messages from the WI's findings on strategies that can improve uptake:

- As other research has shown, the availability of evening and weekend appointments has the potential to increase cervical screening uptake, particularly among women aged 25 to 49.
- The majority of respondents were not aware as to whether their GP practice offers flexible appointment times, meaning that many women could be missing out.

What is the WI calling for on this issue?

- **We recognise the impact of the pandemic on the cervical screening programme and the considerable pressure the health service is under, as well as the effects on patients. Therefore if capacity allows and these are already available, we would like to see the availability of evening and weekend appointments for cervical screening promoted.**
- **Where capacity and the challenges of Covid-19 allow, we would encourage GP surgeries to consider offering cervical screening appointments at different times of the day if this is not currently an option. We recognise that this may not be feasible in the short-term as surgeries prioritise responding to the Coronavirus pandemic and resuming cervical screening appointments that may have been cancelled as a result.**
- **Cervical screening providers to consider implementing text reminders to those due cervical screening.**

Demographics of the WI's survey respondents:

In total we received 2,849 complete responses.

- 87% were based in England and 12% in Wales. Less than 1% were based in each of the following areas: Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man
- 39% were aged 25 to 49

- 38% were aged 50 to 64
- 20% were aged 65 to 74
- 3% were aged 75 or older

Attitudes towards evening and weekend appointments amongst those aged 25 to 64:

- 60% of people aged 25 to 64 did not know whether their GP practice offers weekend appointments for cervical screening. Only 2% said their GP practice does, and 37% said theirs does not.
- 25% said that if weekend appointments were available to them they would be more likely to attend cervical screening.
- 66% did not know whether their GP practice offers evening appointments for cervical screening. 24% said their GP practice does not, while 10% said theirs does.
- 29% said that if evening appointments were available to them they would be more likely to attend cervical screening.

Differences in attitudes and preferences between age groups:

- 41% of respondents aged 25 to 49 said they would be more likely to attend cervical screening if evening appointments were available to them, compared with 16% of those aged 50 to 64.
- 36% of respondents aged 25 to 49 said they would be more likely to attend cervical screening if weekend appointments were available to them, compared with 15% of those aged 50 to 64.
- People aged 50 to 64 were more likely to be unsure as to whether their GP practice offered weekend and evening appointments, compared with those aged 24 to 49.

Text reminders to book cervical screening appointments

- 77% of people aged 25 to 64 said they have never received a reminder by text to book their cervical screening appointment. Of those that said no or don't know, 86% said they would find text reminders that they are due cervical screening helpful.
- 90% of people aged 25 to 64 said they receive text reminders for other health services.

Further information

Please contact the NFWI's Public Affairs Department at pa@nfwl.org.uk for more information about this research.

To find out more about the WI's 5 Minutes that Matter campaign, visit www.thewi.org.uk/campaigns/key-and-current-campaigns/5-minutes-that-matter