

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month – October 2023

### Communications Toolkit

#### About the campaign

Every October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which is marked worldwide to show support for everyone affected by breast cancer.

We are expecting UK-based charities to lead public-facing awareness raising efforts and we want to support with relevant content, to add the NHS England voice with a call to action for all women to attend their breast screening appointments when invited.

#### Approach and focus

As the uptake amongst **women attending their first appointment** is less than 50 per cent we are targeting this group (age 50+), because we know that if an individual comes for their first screening they are more likely to come forward for subsequent screening appointments.

Using our insight work to inform our messaging, we are developing content relevant for different groups and communities. Comms colleagues in the regions can use all the material spread across the month or pick and choose resources to complement any existing plans in your areas.

We will focus on helping people to know what to expect, to address the fear and embarrassment that we know is a barrier for many.

#### Our objectives/aims

- Use NHS channels to remind women about the importance of attending breast screening appointments when invited.
- Encourage healthcare professionals and services to promote key messages across their channels.

## **How you can help spread the word**

- Please share our messages and videos on your own NHSE social media channels/newsletters – see below table of resources for social content. We will circulate new assets as they become available and upload to Comms Link.
- Please share GP practice video screen and social assets with local systems for use.

## **Breast screening insights**

The NHS England Vaccinations and Screening team recently commissioned insight work to better understand people's views on breast screening. This research focused on understanding the barriers to attending screening appointments.

Key findings:

- There was fear and anxiety that the procedure would be painful and uncomfortable. There were suggestions that information about what to expect could help with this.
- People were put off because they didn't know what to expect – fear of the unknown.
- Participants who felt embarrassment talked about discomfort in showing their body.
- Participants typically noted that it would be important for them to know that a female healthcare professional would carry out the procedure.
- Some said that more information about what to expect could help prepare people and would help combat some of these feelings of fear, anxiety and embarrassment.

Focus groups told us that information provision as to why screening is important and what it looks for, support to overcome fear and anxiety and practicalities to support ease of attending an appointment were all key factors in overcoming barriers to attending, and we have reflected this in our messaging and development of new Social content.

## Key messages

- Breast screening saves lives as cancers can be diagnosed and treated earlier than they would have been without screening, often before you can even see or feel any changes to your breasts yourself. All women aged from 50 up to their 71st birthday are invited for free NHS breast screening.
- Screening saves lives, yet less than half of women attend their first breast screening appointment when invited.
- It's understandable some women are anxious about attending their breast screening appointment and your mammographer will do everything she can to make the experience as comfortable as possible for you.
- If you have been invited for breast screening but missed or did not book an appointment you can still [contact your local NHS breast screening service](#) to arrange one, even if you were invited weeks, months or years ago.
- Breast screening services are more accessible than ever. As well as hospitals, mobile screening vans are available in convenient community locations, such as supermarket car parks.
- Women of all ages should be 'breast aware'. Get to know how your breasts normally look, you will be more likely to spot any changes that might be signs of breast cancer. If you are concerned, do not hesitate to contact your GP practice.
- It is important that you continue to look at and check your breasts regularly, even if you have just had a mammogram.

## Useful Screening statistics

- Over 2 million women receive a mammogram each year.
- Screening prevents an estimated 1,300 deaths from breast cancer each year in the UK.
- Around **4 in every 100 women** are asked to come back for more tests after screening and offered care and treatment as required. Out of these **4 women, 1 will be found to have cancer**.

- Screening is vital in helping the NHS identify cancers at an earlier stage and in 2021-2022 the **NHS breast screening programme led to cancers being detected in 20,152 women across England**, which otherwise may have been diagnosed and treated at a later stage.

## **Social media**

Please remember to use the hashtag **#breastcancerawarenessmonth**

### **X (formerly Twitter)/Insta/Facebook/LinkedIn – example posts/captions for encouraging screening attendance**

- Worried about your first breast screening appointment? We've got you. Here's a video explaining exactly what to expect.
- Every screening we do is potentially saving a life, so remember to book and attend your appointment when invited. Let us know if you can't make it, so we can rearrange.
- Have you been invited for your breast screening? Put your health at the top of your to-do list and book your appointment as soon as you can. Screening saves lives. Please don't wait – it's time to put you first.
- It's important that you attend your breast screening when invited. If you missed your last one, book an appointment now – it is not too late.

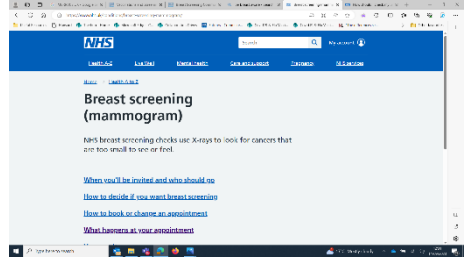
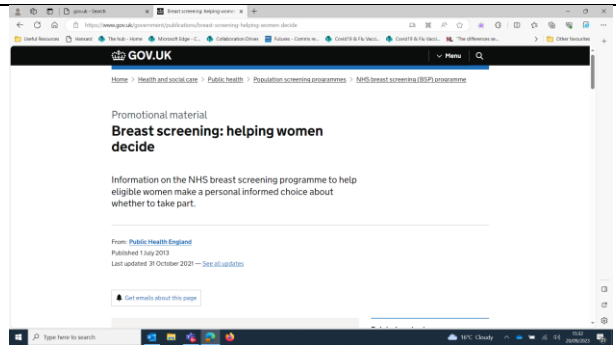
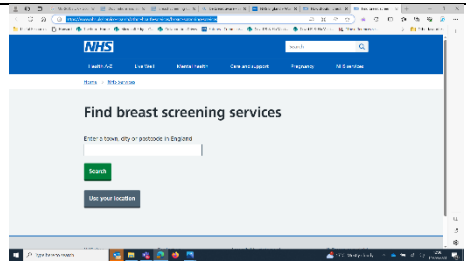
## Resources for sharing

Please keep checking the Breast Cancer Awareness Week folders on the [CommsLink](#) or [Vaccinations and Screening FutureNHS](#) pages for any additional new content, which will be uploaded there.

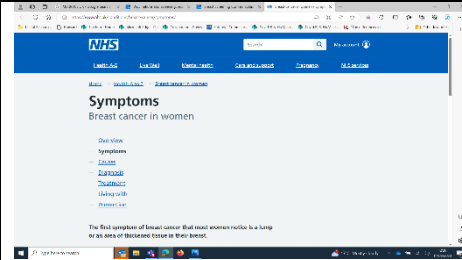
| Asset  | Thumbnail | Link                       |
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| <p><b>We're working on four new assets with our Social team which will be uploaded to the above Futures links when ready, or you can re-share from the NHSE accounts when they are posted:</b></p> <p><b>Insta carousel</b><br/>Tips if you're anxious/fearful/embarrassed.</p> <p><b>YouTube/Insta reel</b> 3 x 'what to expect' video clips with St George's BS unit.</p> <p><b>X static card</b> with 'Screening saves lives yet less than half of women attend their breast screening when invited for the first time – book your appointment today. It's not too late'.</p> <p><b>GP practice waiting room screen</b><br/>Same as the X card above with call to action.</p> |           | *Will be added when ready* |

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| <p><b>Social cards from South Asian breast cancer survivor, encouraging women to check their breasts.</b></p>   | <p>Usha Marwaha<br/>Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009</p>   | <p><a href="#">Usha Marwaha - quote card 2 - CommsLink - FutureNHS Collaboration Platform</a></p>   |
|   | <p>Usha Marwaha<br/>Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009</p>   | <p><a href="#">Usha Marwaha - quote card 1 - CommsLink - FutureNHS Collaboration Platform</a></p>   |
| <p><b>Three different animations from Partnership Switham to highlight the benefits of breast screening to black women of West African heritage</b></p> |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://youtu.be/iCYBCcj0llo">https://youtu.be/iCYBCcj0llo</a></li> <li><a href="https://youtu.be/iKH4cJGaN10">https://youtu.be/iKH4cJGaN10</a></li> <li><a href="https://youtu.be/d1nU9UQsYJo">https://youtu.be/d1nU9UQsYJo</a></li> </ol> |
| <p><b>NHS UK static social card – signs of breast cancer</b></p>  | <p>What are the signs and symptoms of breast cancer? <b>NHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A change in the size, outline or shape of your breast</li> <li>A discharge of fluid from either of your nipples</li> <li>Changes in your skin such as puckering, dimpling, redness or a rash</li> <li>Any change in nipple position (pulled in or pointing differently)</li> <li>A new lump, thickening or bumpy area in one breast or armpit</li> <li>Swelling in your armpit, collarbone or breasts</li> <li>An eczema like rash, chaffing, scaling, itching or redness on or around the nipple</li> <li>Breast pain is not usually a symptom of breast cancer</li> </ul> <p>See a GP if you notice any changes</p> | <p>*Will be added to Comms Link shortly – awaiting clinical sign off*</p>   |

## Useful webpages to link to

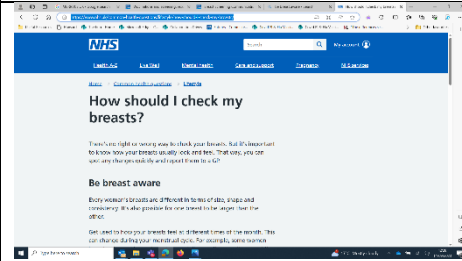
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| <p><b>About breast screening</b></p>      |    | <p><a href="https://www.nhs.uk">Breast screening (mammogram) - NHS (www.nhs.uk)</a></p>              |
| <p><b>Helping you decide leaflets</b></p> |  | <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk">Breast screening: helping women decide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a></p> |
| <p><b>Find your local service</b></p>     |  | <p><a href="https://www.nhs.uk">Find breast screening services - NHS (www.nhs.uk)</a></p>            |

**Breast cancer symptoms to look out for**



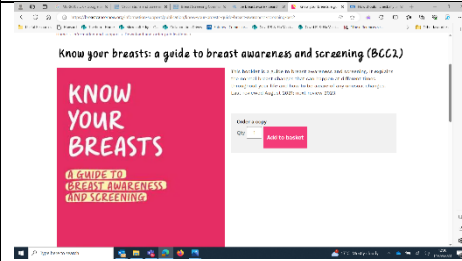
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer/symptoms/>

**How to check my breasts**



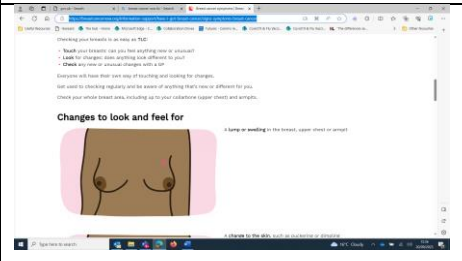
[How should I check my breasts? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer/how-to-check-my-breasts/)

**Breast Cancer Now leaflet - Know your breasts**



['Know your breasts: a guide to breast awareness and screening' booklet \(breastcancer.org\)](https://www.breastcancer.org.uk/leaflet/know-your-breasts)

**Touch Look Check – advice on how to check your breasts**



[Breast cancer symptoms | Breast Cancer Now](https://www.breastcancer.org.uk/leaflet/know-your-breasts)