



Craig Whittaker MP

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CERVICAL SCREENING

Thank you for contacting me about cervical cancer.

I know that early diagnosis is key to overcoming cervical cancer and I agree that cervical screening plays an important role in preventing its development.

The NHS Cervical Screening Programme in England offers screening to women aged 25 to 49 every three years, and women aged 50 to 64 every five years. This is recommended to the Government by the UK National Screening Committee and has reduced the number of cervical cancer cases in the UK. The NHS works with Public Health England, Local Authorities and various charities to maintain and increase the rates of screening.

In 2012, the Committee recommended that the age of first invitation for cervical screening should be age 25 as there is evidence of a large number of women screened and treated with relatively little benefit below this age. Cervical cancer in women under the age of 25 is very rare with just 2.6 cases per 100,000 women. Younger women often undergo natural and harmless changes in the cervix that screening would identify as cervical abnormalities, and in most cases these abnormalities resolve themselves without any need for treatment.

With regard to women under the age of 25 suffering from abnormal bleeding, I am aware that GPs have been advised that it is best practice that cervical screening tests should not be performed on women displaying these symptoms.

It is important that women realise that cervical screening can prevent cancer and the Government encourages women of screening age to make an informed decision to attend when invited for screening. A leaflet is sent out with every invitation for screening to provide women with clear, honest and balanced information.

Access to cervical screening is a very important element of the programme and Public Health England is closely considering what further steps can be taken to continually improve the uptake of screening.

The Programme has also been working with Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust to encourage women with learning disabilities to be screened and ensure that these women and their carers are kept fully informed.

It is very encouraging to see that HPV vaccine uptake in girls remains high. Over eight million doses of HPV vaccine have been given in the United Kingdom since 2008, with close to 90 per cent of eligible teenagers vaccinated. This will provide real health benefits, protecting against cervical cancer in later life.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP