



Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington

Helping people with learning disabilities to attend a cancer screening



A guide for family carers and support workers



What this leaflet is about

Do you support or care for a person with learning disabilities?

Do they find it challenging to attend medical appointments or participate in tests such as cancer screenings?

People with learning disabilities are less likely to take part in cancer screening.

Cancer screening can help find cancer early or find changes before cancer develops.

This guide helps family carers and support workers:

- Talk about cancer screening
- Support people to attend appointments
- Ask for reasonable adjustments

This leaflet covers four NHS cancer screening programmes:



- Bowel cancer screening
- Breast cancer screening
- Cervical cancer screening
- Lung cancer screening

Easy-read leaflets and videos are available to help explain what happens at each screening.



Supporting a person with learning disabilities to attend a cancer screening

A person with learning disabilities may find cancer screening worrying or difficult.

Healthcare services must make reasonable adjustments. This is a [legal right](#).

A person with learning disabilities can ask for the following [reasonable adjustments](#):

- Longer or “double” appointment times if they need more time with a doctor or nurse to make sure they understand the information and procedure.
- A preferred appointment slot, e.g. later or earlier in the day, if they find it difficult to wait in their GP surgery or hospital.
- To bring their family carer or support worker to appointments.
- Information in easy-read format to help explain the procedure. There are web links in this leaflet, or you can ask your GP to print a copy.
- Wheelchair or suitable access to the GP surgery or screening unit.
- A quiet place to wait or a private room.
- Help from a learning disability nurse.
- A telephone call from a healthcare clinician to answer any questions before or after the appointment.



Did you know that...

98 out of **100** people
do not need further
tests after
completing their
bowel screening
test.



Breast screening
saves around
1,300
lives a year.



3 out of **4** lung
cancers found
through screening
are at an early
stage.



Cervical screening checks
for the **virus HPV** (human
papillomavirus)
and cell changes in
the cervix.



NHS cancer screening programmes

The NHS cancer screening programmes are **free** for all eligible people registered with a GP. Eligible people are invited to attend a cancer screening by letter, text message or the NHS App. The screening might be at your GP Surgery, a hospital, an NHS mobile unit or using a home-testing kit.

It is important to encourage and help people with learning disabilities to attend their screening when they are invited. Here is some information on the screenings that they might be invited for.



Bowel cancer screening

Bowel cancer screening can help prevent bowel cancer or find it early. **Bowel cancer is the fourth most common type of cancer.**



People aged 50 to 74 are invited every 2 years.

The test:

- A bowel screening kit (FIT kit) is sent to the home
- A small sample of poo is collected using a stick
- The sample is posted to a lab for testing

The test is done at home.

Most people do not need further tests.

Invitations and results:

People may get their invitations and reminders by:

- Letter
- Text
- The NHS App

Results are usually sent by letter or the NHS App.

How carers can help:

- Help read the instructions
- Support the person to take the sample
- Help post the kit
- Order a new kit if needed

If you need to order a new kit for the person you care for, you can call the free phone number **0800 707 60 60**.



You can visit this website to watch the video:

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening

More information on bowel cancer screening can be found here:

- gov.uk/government/publications/bowel-cancer-screening-easy-guide
- booksbeyondwords.co.uk/resources-dl



Breast cancer screening

Breast screening uses X-rays to look for breast cancer early.

The test is called a **mammogram**.



People registered as female with a GP are invited:

- Every 3 years
- Between the ages of 50 and 71
- Some people may be invited earlier or later as part of an NHS trial.

Breast cancer is the most common type of cancer in the UK.

Finding cancer early can make successful treatment more likely.

You can have breast screening, whatever the size or shape of your breasts.

The appointment:

- The screening happens at a hospital or mobile unit
- The breast is placed between two plates for a short time
- The test can feel uncomfortable, but it is very quick

How carers can help:

- If the person you care for or support has received an invitation for breast screening, you can help them to book an appointment by calling the Breast Screening Service: **020 3758 2024**
- Explain what will happen
- If required, visit the site prior to the appointment to have a better idea of what will happen
- Go to the appointment with the person

More information on breast screening can be found here:

- gov.uk/government/publications/breast-screening-information-for-women-with-learning-disabilities
- breastcancernow.org/about-breast-cancer/primary-breast-cancer/supporting-someone/supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities



Where to go for your breast cancer screening

- **Edgware Community Hospital**



Deansbrook House, Edgware Community Hospital,
Deansbrook Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 9BA.
Report to hospital reception desk.

- **Finchley Memorial Hospital**



Granville Road, London N12 0JE.
Report to hospital reception desk.

- **Highgate Station Car Park**



Highgate Station, Archway Road, N6 5UA.
Mobile van with steps.

- **Kentish Town Health Centre**



2 Bartholomew Road, London NW5 2BX.
Very limited disabled street parking.

- **St. Michaels Primary Care Centre**



Cedar House, Gater Drive, Middlesex. EN2 0JB.
Mobile screening van

- **North Middlesex Hospital**



Sterling Way, London N18 1QX. Mobile
screening van located near the hospital car
park off Bull Lane.

- **Potters Bar**



Furzefield Leisure Centre, Mutton Lane,
Potters Bar, Herts EN6 3BW.

Wheelchair users are advised to call the service to ensure that X-ray machines are wheelchair compatible.

Cervical cancer screening

Cervical screening helps prevent cervical cancer. It checks for a virus called HPV (human papillomavirus).

It is not a test for cancer, but it finds problems early.



Who is invited:

- People aged 25 to 64 who have a cervix and are registered with a GP are invited.
- Everyone is invited every 5 years if their last result was normal.
- Those testing positive for HPV will be invited to have further tests.

Invitations and results:

Eligible patients will receive invitations and reminders by:

- The NHS App
- Letter
- Text

Results are sent:

- By NHS App if normal
- By letter if you don't have the NHS App, or further tests are needed

The appointment:

- Done by a nurse or other clinical staff at the GP surgery
- A small instrument (speculum) is used
- A soft brush is used to collect cells
- The test usually takes less than a minute

HPV self-sampling

Some people who are overdue may be offered HPV self-sampling. This means:

- The person takes their own sample with a swab
- This may be done at the GP surgery or at home
- The swab is sent to a lab for testing



How carers can help:

- Help the person understand what cervical screening is and why it is important
- Help the person to download the NHS App and turn on the notifications
- Help check invitation letters or messages on the NHS App, text or those sent by post
- Help the person book an appointment at their GP surgery
- Ask for reasonable adjustments from the GP surgery
- If the person you care for or support is eligible and has not received an invitation or is overdue for their screening, you can help them to contact their GP practice.

More information on cervical screening can be found here:

- gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-supporting-women-with-learning-disabilities
- eveappeal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Easy-Read-cervical-screening_updated-Oct-2025-2.pdf.pagespeed.ce.xdWlB2ddWa.pdf



Lung cancer screening

Lung cancer screening checks the lungs to find problems early.

Finding lung cancer early can make treatment work better.



Who is invited:

Lung cancer screening is offered to people:

- Aged 55 to 74
- Who smoke or who previously smoked
- Every 2 years

People must receive an invitation from the NHS.

The lung health check:

The first appointment is a lung health check.

This may include:

- Questions about your health
- Support to stop smoking

The scan:

Some people will be offered a CT scan.

- The scan is quick and painless
- It takes pictures of the lungs
- It usually takes a few minutes

Results:

Most people do not need further tests.

Results are usually sent by letter or explained by a healthcare professional over the phone.

How carers can help:

- Explain the invitation
- Go to appointments
- Ask for reasonable adjustments
- Help the person feel calm



More information on lung cancer can be found here:

- lungchecklondon.org/
- nclcanceralliance.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/UCLH-easy-read-resource-Screening-3-1.pdf



NHS App

Use the NHS App to see your cancer screening invitations and results.

What you can do:

- See if you are due for a test
- Book or change appointments
- View your screening results
- Get information and advice



Types of screening you may see:

- Cervical screening
- Bowel screening

How the NHS App can help carers and support workers:

- View screening letters and invitations
- Help someone book or change appointments
- Support people to understand results

Remember:

- Screening is free
- You can say no if you don't want it
- Early checks can save lives

Need help?

- Use the help section in the app
- Call your local NHS support line





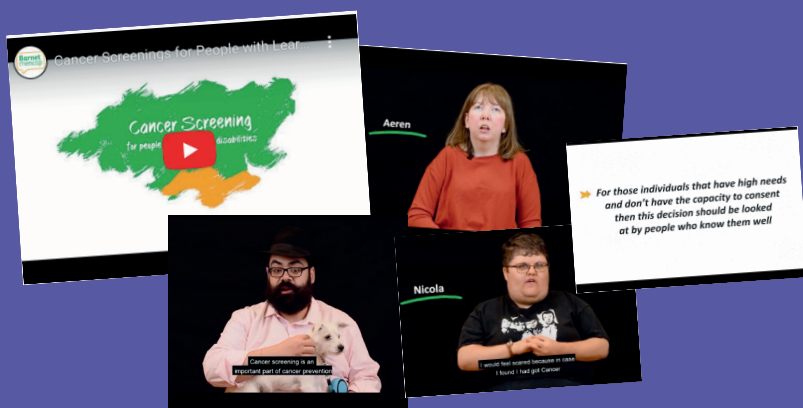
Cancer screening films

It might be helpful for a person with learning disabilities to watch a short film about taking part in a cancer screening. There are films about people with learning disabilities experiences of receiving cancer screening invitations. The films explain what happens during a cancer screening and what equipment is used for each procedure. This can help people to make their decision about attending a screening and help them to prepare for the screening itself.



You can watch our film on the Barnet Mencap's YouTube channel:

- youtube.com/watch?v=qTmFPiJKjzc&t=3s





Test your knowledge about cancer screenings

1. How often should you carry out a bowel cancer screening test?

Once a year

☐

Once every two years

☐

Once every three years

☐

2. What is the name of the machine used to check your lungs during lung cancer screening?

Ultrasound machine

☐

MRI Scanner

☐

CT Scanner

☐



3. How long does it take to collect a cervical screening sample?

10 minutes

☐

Less than a minute

☐

5 minutes

☐

4. How often will you be invited for a breast cancer screening?

Twice a year

☐

Once every 3 years

☐

Once every 5 years

☐

Now check your answers below!

Quiz answers

1. Once every two years

2. CT Scanner

3. Less than a minute

4. Once every three years



This leaflet has been produced by Barnet Mencap, North Central London Cancer Alliance, Barnet Council, North Central London Integrated Care System, and Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington Community Learning Disabilities Teams, and carers centres.