

2 May 2018

To: General Practice, England

Dear Colleague,

Re: National Breast Screening Incident

You will have received correspondence from Public Health England (PHE) about an issue with the NHS Breast Screening Programme, which has led to some women who were due to be invited for mammography between their 68th and 71st birthday, missing their final invitation. PHE has provided detail on the issue, how it is being managed, and the arrangements for PHE's Patient Notification Exercise (PNE). This information should help you if you receive queries from your patients.

PHE will write to all women that have been affected by this issue to let them know where they can go for advice and support. Letters will begin to go to affected women from 3 May. The letter will explain what has happened and what they can now expect with clear advice on how they can take up the offer of a screen if they choose and how to get further advice and support. Copies of PHE's two patient letters been sent to you along with professional advice. PHE has put in place a helpline for women who have been advised by letter that they are affected and want further advice. They also have support from Breast Cancer Care and Macmillan helplines to take calls from women who have been affected and have cancer. NHS Choices has specific information for women affected by this incident and 111 will also hold core information.

Any of your patients who have been affected by this incident will receive a letter by the end of May. Invitations for screening will be sent to women week commencing 14 May and will continue over the following weeks.

- Those who are aged under 72 will automatically receive an invite for a catch up screen.
- Patients aged between 72 and 79 will also be sent information on how they can request a screening appointment through the national helpline.

- All women affected who wish to have a breast screen will receive an appointment before the end of October 2018.
- Woman who have not received a letter by the end of May can be reassured they have not been affected by the incident.
- Patients can continue to opt into further screening beyond their 72nd birthday. To do this they should make arrangements to opt into continued screening through the practice using usual processes.

PHE is working with clinicians to provide a risk assessment based on published criteria for each affected woman who has had a diagnosis of breast cancer after the age of 71 years. Expert advice is that missing a single breast screen at around 70 years of age is unlikely to have made a significant difference to a woman's breast cancer and how it is treated. However, some patients who have received a letter informing them about the incident may have developed breast cancer and will be concerned their prognosis has been affected by the screening incident. This risk assessment will consider whether or not the missed invitation could have altered when their cancer was diagnosed and whether, if it was diagnosed earlier, this could have affected their treatment or prognosis. If women request a risk assessment, the findings will be sent to their breast screening service. PHE will ask women how they want the findings fed back to them personally.

Thank you sincerely for your support in responding to this incident. We appreciate the pressure this may place on your service and staff and would like to thank you in advance for the efforts you will make to support women who have been affected. If you have any specific questions please contact your local Screening QA Service and Screening and Immunisation Team.

Yours sincerely



Dr David Geddes
Director of Primary Care Commissioning
NHS England