

31 January, 2018

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Gateway reference: 07590

Dear Colleagues

**Breast cancer in women over 70 years of age: Be Clear on Cancer campaign launching
22 February – 31 March 2018**

I am writing to inform you that Public Health England will be re-running the Be Clear on Cancer '*breast cancer in women over 70*' campaign from 22 February to the end of March 2018.

We need your help and support to make the most of this opportunity. Please could you:

- Cascade this letter and the campaign overview attached amongst relevant teams, so where possible, they can plan for any changes in the demand for services.
- Be aware of the key messages of the campaign and champion the importance of supporting this activity.

The overview attached provides more detail on the campaign and how you can register to get further information.

Older women with breast cancer have poorer relative survival rates, highlighting the necessity to improve early diagnosis for this group. Breast cancer risk increases with age and getting older is the second biggest risk factor after being female, yet awareness of age-related risk is poorly understood across the UK. Given the increased risk faced by older women, it is clear that symptom awareness and promoting prompt presentation with symptoms are critical.

The '*breast cancer in women over 70*' campaign has run across England twice before. On both occasions we have seen an increase not only in awareness of the campaign messages, but also in the number of cancers diagnosed. Although this campaign focuses on age-related risk and symptoms, especially non-lump symptoms which have lower levels of awareness, I would encourage you to share news of this campaign with screening colleagues in your area as the campaign may lead to additional self-referrals in older women.

We are making progress with improving cancer outcomes but we still have a long way to go. When comparing England with comparable countries, the picture for older women with breast cancer is far worse and we need to address this. I would therefore encourage you to support Public Health England and their planned Be Clear on Cancer activities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chris Harrison', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Professor Chris Harrison
National Clinical Director (Cancer), NHS England
Medical Director, The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, Manchester