

GPs in Newham and Tower Hamlets report positive responses to HPV self-sampling kits

Since the YouScreen HPV self-sampling study, led by King's College London, was launched in February 2021, GP practices in the London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Islington, Newham and Tower Hamlets have reported a very positive response from their patients.

Women and people with a cervix in these boroughs, who are overdue their cervical screening by at least six months, can complete the HPV test kit themselves at home.

YouScreen kits are being offered by GPs during an unrelated appointment if a person is at least six months overdue their cervical screening. Kits are also being mailed directly, via the national screening database, to those who are 15 months overdue. HPV – human papillomavirus – can lead to cell changes in the cervix that may become cancerous. These can easily be treated if picked up early.

Miss Alexandra Lawrence, consultant gynaecological oncologist at the Royal London Hospital and co-chair of the YouScreen Study steering group, said:

“Acceptance of cervical screening in the participating boroughs was amongst the lowest in England, and so the YouScreen Study is especially important for our area. The kit is straightforward and comfortable to use, and you can do it at home.

“We've had reports of people who for various reasons have missed cervical screening invitations, but they've tried YouScreen and fed back to their GP how easy it is. Many have strong reasons for not taking up cervical screening invitations in the past, including sexual abuse, FGM and gynaecological conditions.

“YouScreen is a gamechanger. It's been very encouraging to see that when GP practices give patients the opportunity to try a YouScreen kit, they value using it. We hope that when people receive a kit in the post at home they respond to it just as positively.”

The YouScreen Study is assessing the effectiveness of offering HPV self-sampling to increase the uptake of cervical screening. Identifying HPV allows treatment of abnormal cells in the cervix so we can stop cancer before it starts. Kits are offered via GPs at participating practices and by post until later in the year.

Further information about YouScreen is available at <https://www.smallc.org.uk/get-involved/get-involved-youscreen/> or visit our North East London Cancer Alliance pages: <https://www.eastlondonhcp.nhs.uk/aboutus/youscreen.htm>