

# Cancer screening saves lives. Don't miss out on your invitation.



The 'Cancer screening saves lives' campaign aimed to raise awareness of the cancer screening programmes available in Northern Ireland and to encourage all who are eligible to attend when invited. The campaign also aimed to raise awareness that screening is for those without cancer symptoms; anyone with symptoms should seek advice from their GP without delay. The campaign ran throughout April and May 2024.

Community Pharmacy  
**Living Well**  
Campaign

Over **54,150 patients** were engaged through 505 pharmacies on campaign messages.

Over **53,900 leaflets** were distributed.

**401 pharmacies** reported the public's feedback to the campaign to be positive or very positive.

**468 pharmacies** felt campaign resources supported them to answer queries or know where to signpost patients to.

The main age groups provided with campaign information were those aged **31-50, 51-60, 61-70 and 71-80 years old.**

The main queries addressed were in relation to **bowel cancer symptoms and screening, breast cancer screening, stop smoking, healthy diet and age eligibility.**

**251 pharmacies** handed a leaflet to patients they knew could benefit from it.

**151 pharmacies** referred patients to their GP.

**78 pharmacies** referred patients to another community pharmacy service e.g. Stop smoking service

**427 pharmacies** felt the campaign helped to support their pharmacy team's health and wellbeing.

**18 pharmacies** completed additional training/professional development as a result of the campaign.

### How did pharmacy engage?

- 59** Visual displays (other than posters)
- 61** Via their delivery driver
- 92** Via social media or their website
- 278** Provided leaflets alongside prescriptions
- 304** Verbally informed patients

### Number of pharmacies that provided campaign information to the following:

- 417** Elderly
- 337** Those with long term health conditions
- 231** Young families
- 206** Socially isolated
- 184** Those with drug or alcohol addiction issues
- 180** Housebound
- 155** Those living in poverty or deprivation

“Patient who had been treating a mouth ulcer for a few months and when I looked at it I flagged it to GP as possible risk of mouth cancer. Unfortunately this was the case. Another example was blood in stool and flagged them to GP for further investigation.”

“This was probably one of the most impactful campaigns as there were so many angles to starting conversation with patients. We ran 2 Saturday all day events staffed by our healthcare advisors who referred customers to our pharmacist. On one of those particular days there was a patient referred who had concerns about diarrhoea and constipation. On questioning her the pharmacist knew that her symptoms needed referral so she rang the GP for the patient who saw her and ended up referring her urgently for a colonoscopy. “

“I directed a patient to GP to get a mole checked. He later came back to thank me as it was a melanoma which he was now getting treatment for.”

“As two members of my own family have died from cancer--I found that I was doing a lot of personal counselling to people who had either experienced cancer ,were going through cancer or were worried about other family members. I was able to identify and explain the cancer journey from screening to diagnosis and treatment options and all the possible outcomes .As a result I personally counselled about 50 people -many who came to me after a recommendation from others.”

“We teamed up with the local men shed group in the area which is a group of men to meet socially for different activities to improve their mental health and eliminate loneliness. The men joked around and enjoyed the talk but after we were able to stick around and many had more personal questions that they wished to ask including some symptoms they were concerned about and how to go about getting more private tests done such as prostate and bowel cancer screening done. Two men were referred to their GP and we were able to remove a few stigmas around getting such screening tests done explaining it is common and routine and nothing to be embarrassed about.”

“This campaign definitely made an impact with the public. People asked many more questions about screening, if they should get screened, how to go about it. It opened conversation.”

“A lady in her late 30's came in concerned about a raised skin rash that had very recently appeared. She did not want to bother her GP as it was not bothering her, there was no pain and it was in an area that would keep it hidden under clothing. Several of our pharmacists examined the raised lumpy rash and after a detailed discussion and some internet searches to try to identify a possible diagnosis, we all agreed that it warranted an immediate examination by GP. Without unduly worrying the lady, who was in the pharmacy with 2 young children, we contacted her GP while she waited and GP agreed to see her right away. A few days later the lady was in the pharmacy again and thanked us all for our concern. Her GP was equally concerned and had organised an urgent referral to dermatology and the patient was hoping to be seen within the next week or two. She promised to keep us updated and was very grateful for our pressing her to get it looked at without delay. “

“Recommended a patient to be started on the smoking cessation program, and they were successful to give up smoking. Felt like I made a difference to ones life!”

“It was good to be able to provide the public with convenient information on the screening services which they are entitled to. I would imagine that if you asked the average person on the street, they wouldn't have a clue what services are available when they reach a particular age group. I spoke to a couple of individuals as they lifted leaflets at the counter and I just enforced the importance of not missing whatever screening services they are entitled to. Some individuals would rather ignore an issue rather than do something about it, for fear of receiving bad news.”

“Referred two people with suspicious skin lesions through my own intervention. One turned out to be cancerous and the other pre-cancerous and both patients are now on a treatment pathway.”

“Several patients who hadn't responded to letters concerning their screening were more comfortable in replying when they had discussed it with a pharmacist or member of the pharmacy team - in particular bowel cancer screening for 60 and over.”

“At our information afternoon with Cancer Focus NI a skin analysis machine was available for those attending and GP referrals were made if anyone presented with skin concerns.”

“A man in his early 50's was in receiving his usual medication and on counselling him he mentioned that he was going to the loo all the time during the night. I had told him that although men can experience these symptoms as they get older he should see his GP to get his prostate checked. A week later the man returned to the pharmacy to thank me as his GP said his PSA level was higher than normal but that he had addressed the issue early enough to allow treatment to hopefully be very successful.”

“One gentleman seen the cancer screening poster in the pharmacy and made a point of speaking to one of the counter staff how screening had saved his life. He explained he had bowel cancer and was unaware until he was screened. He needed a section of bowel removed but now felt so much better than before and he thought it was great to see poster to encourage people to get screening done.”

“In the "Community Pharmacy Living Well Service - Cancer Screening Saves Lives" program, one impactful interaction was with a 60 year old man who regularly visited the pharmacy. During a routine conversation, I encouraged him to participate in the routine (postal) NHS bowel cancer screening service. Initially hesitant, he eventually agreed. He returned to thank me, expressing how after our chat he had come to realise that screening could actually save his life. This experience underscores the vital role pharmacies play in preventive healthcare and the profound impact we can have on our community's health and lives.”

“Patient from [another country] but in Northern Ireland long term found a lump in her breast and was originally going to wait until July when she went back [home] to be checked, we referred to the cancer screening bus and advised her to temporarily register with a GP in Northern Ireland, she was seen earlier and confirmed stage one breast cancer and has flown home early to receive treatment.”

“One lady with ovarian cancer was very grateful for all the advice to do with screening etc.”

“We have a number of customers undergoing cancer treatment / awaiting diagnosis - they found it very useful to see resources available and it has spurred the team on to engage more with patients proactively.”

“Customers were encouraged by cancer screening materials to attempt smoking cessation to help prevent lung cancer.”

“A 27 year old patient who had received a letter from their GP inviting them for cervical screening asked if they needed to bother as they didn't feel that there was anything wrong with them. During counselling they were advised that all females aged between 25 and 64 will be invited and that between ages of 25 and 49 this will be every 3 years. The patient then contacted the surgery to arrange screening. The next time they were in the pharmacy they thanked the staff for the advice and that everything was clear and it had lifted a weight off their mind.”

“Was able to refer a patient with a suspicious growth on his shoulder. It appeared to be a boil and was oozing. He had a sample taken and it was decided to remove the boil. He later came in to tell me that all his tests had come back clear and thanked me for referring him on as the doctors had said it may have turned cancerous.”

“A customer (seeing the healthy living campaign) asked to speak to Pharmacist. She had developed oddly shaped mole on the side of her face. I consulted patient and felt best to refer. Other than seeing campaign, patient may have never got it evaluated.”

## Feedback from webinar attendees

**40 pharmacy staff**

attended a bespoke webinar

**'Cancer screening'**

Delivered by PHA.

Facilitated by NICPLD.

"I liked how the symptoms of cancers were discussed and what screening services were offered and for what age groups."

"I particularly liked the examples and practical information we can convey to patients."

"What screening programs are currently available in NI and how patients are called/access the services and tips on how to advise people who are concerned about outcomes they receive."