

Spot it, Stop it: Bowel cancer awareness campaign toolkit

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September 2026

Bowel cancer awareness toolkit

Our campaign – Spot it, stop it

Bowel cancer is much talked about in the press but still, too few people are diagnosed at an early stage, when there are greater treatment options available.

We have compiled relevant information and resources to produce this toolkit, which aims to support you in raising awareness within your teams and communities. Please feel free to use as much (or little) of the information included, to support your own bowel cancer campaign or awareness raising in your area.

Our target audience

- All genders
- All ages but with focus on 50-74 years old

Our campaign partners

- Thames Valley Cancer Alliance
- NHS England South East
- NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board
- NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire

Use this toolkit to select, adapt and share bowel cancer awareness messages across your services and communities

Top Tips!

1. **Choose relevant content:** Think who you are try are trying to engage and their needs to tailor your message
2. **Adopt Multichannel Approaches:** Combine different methods, such as SMS for direct, actionable reminders and social media with simple graphics for broader engagement
3. **Use provided assets:** We have created a range of resources including downloadable graphics to help you
4. **Use peer messenger's**: Leverage local clinicians, community leaders or local champions to cascade information and increase trust

About bowel cancer

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

Facts about bowel cancer

- Bowel cancer is the 4th most common cancer in the UK. There are around 46,600 new bowel cancer cases in the UK every year, that's around 130 every day
- In females in the UK, bowel cancer is the 3rd most common cancer, with around 20,600 new cases every year.
- In males in the UK, bowel cancer is the 2nd most common cancer, with around 25,900 new cases every year.
- Bowel cancer is the 2nd most common cause of cancer death in the UK.
- More than nine out of ten new cases (94%) are diagnosed in people over the age of 50. But bowel cancer can affect anyone of any age.
- Bowel cancer is treatable and curable especially if diagnosed early.
- There are around 17,700 bowel cancer deaths in the UK every year, that's 48 every day
- More than 1 in 2 (53.9%) people diagnosed with rectal cancer in the UK survive their disease for ten years or more, it is predicted (2018).

Bowel cancer risk factors

We don’t know what causes most bowel cancers, but there are some factors that increase your risk of getting the disease. Some of these are things you can’t do anything about, for example, age and genetics. But you can make some changes to your lifestyle to lower your risk of getting bowel cancer.

You are more at risk of getting bowel cancer if you have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Aged over 50
- A family history of bowel cancer or Lynch Syndrome
- A history of non-cancerous growths (polyps) in your bowel
- An inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis
- Type 2 diabetes
- An unhealthy lifestyle - around 54% of cancers can be prevented by having a healthier lifestyle

References:
Bowel cancer statistics | Cancer Research
Bowel cancer risk | Cancer Research UK
Risk factors | About bowel cancer | Bowel Cancer UK

About bowel cancer

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

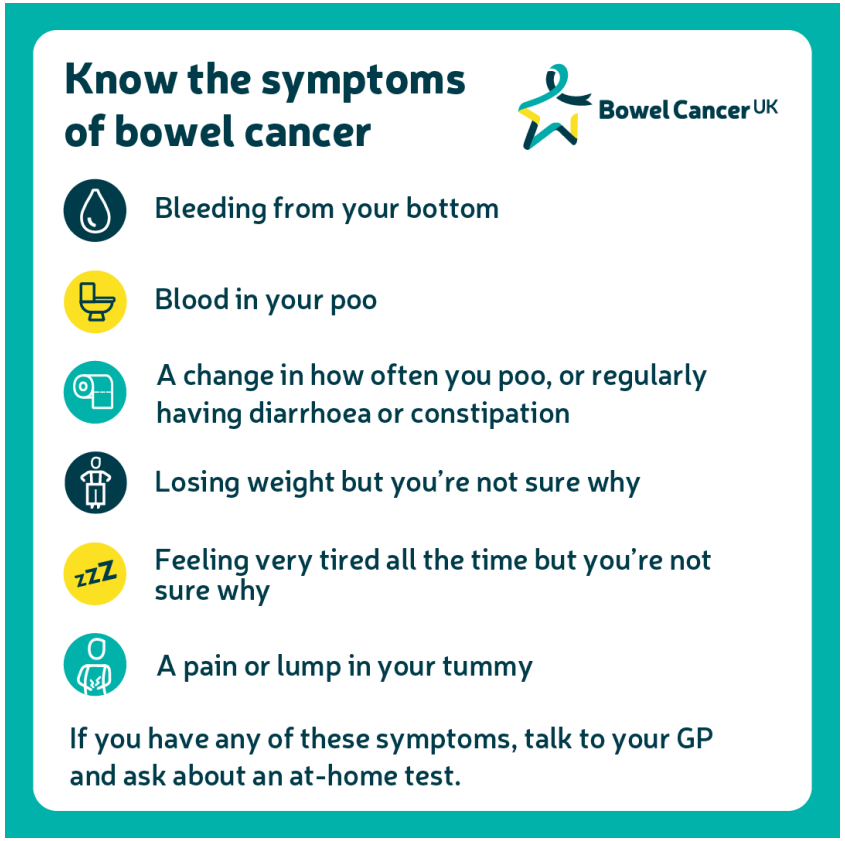
Signs and symptoms of bowel cancer

Bowel cancer can affect anyone, whatever your age, gender, ethnicity or where you live.

Symptoms can include:

- bleeding from your bottom
- blood in your poo
- a change in your pooing habits. You might be going more or less often, or have diarrhoea or constipation that might come and go
- losing weight but you're not sure why
- feeling very tired all the time but you're not sure why
- a pain or lump in your tummy

Having these symptoms doesn't always mean you have bowel cancer, but it's still important to find out what's causing them.



Click on the image to download

References:

Bowel cancer statistics | Cancer Research
Bowel cancer risk | Cancer Research UK
Risk factors | About bowel cancer | Bowel Cancer UK

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance



Bowel cancer screening

About bowel cancer screening

The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme offers free home test kits to people aged 50-74 and registered with a GP, every two years. The simple test looks for tiny amounts of blood in poo, which can be an early sign of bowel cancer or polyps (small growths) that could develop into cancer.

Regular screening saves lives by finding cancer at an early stage, when treatment is most effective – often before any symptoms appear.

It is important to complete bowel cancer screening, even if you feel fit and healthy. When it is your turn, you will automatically be sent a test kit to complete and send back

You need to be registered with a GP to receive the kit (anyone can **register with a GP** for free).

You should check that your GP has the most up-to-date home address for you, as this is where your kit will be sent.

If you're aged 75 or over, you can ask for a screening test by calling the free bowel cancer screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60

Call the screening helpline on 0800 707 60 60 or visit the **NHS website** for more information about bowel screening in England.

Bowel cancer screening

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

Key messages: general

- Bowel cancer screening is available to everyone aged 50 to 74.
- The NHS automatically invites people once they become eligible for bowel cancer screening.
- Bowel cancer screening is offered every two years.
- 97 or 98 out of 100 people who use their bowel cancer screening kit do not need further tests.
- 2 or 3 in 100 people are asked to go to hospital for further tests.
- 7 to 10 in every 100 people who have a colonoscopy turn out to have bowel cancer.
- Download the NHS App to get your future messages about bowel cancer screening straight to your smart device.
- Find out more information about bowel cancer screening on the NHS website.

Bowel cancer screening

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

Key messages: Completing your at home FIT test for bowel screening

- If an at home bowel screening FIT kit is sent to you, it's meant for you. Even if you don't have symptoms, it can detect signs of cancer of bowel cancer before you do.
- The kit can be completed in the privacy of your own home by following the simple instructions on the underside of the box lid.
- You only need to collect one tiny sample of poo using the plastic stick provided. Pop it in the sample bottle and post it back for free, to be tested.
- Maybe you think it’s messy or awkward, but by following a few simple steps, a tiny sample is all it takes.
- Your next poo could save your life. So, if you're sent a kit, join the millions completing theirs.
- If you receive a kit when you're eligible, help yourself by remembering to complete it. Put it by the loo. Don't put it off.



Campaign resources

Bowel cancer awareness social media messages

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

Suggested social media posts or SMS text messages: Generic

- Bowel cancer is the 4th most common cancer in the UK and the 2nd biggest cause of cancer death. Know the signs. Visit Bowel Cancer UK for information about signs and symptoms
- Concerned about Bowel Cancer? Speak to your GP - it might not be cancer but it is best to get checked early. Visit Bowel Cancer UK for information about signs and symptoms
- We are supporting the Thames Valley Cancer Alliance to raise awareness of bowel cancer. Know the signs and symptoms and take action – Spot it to stop it.

Suggested social media posts or text messages: Bowel screening

- If you've had a #BowelCancer testing kit through the post, don't forget to send it back. Your next poo could save your life. Find out more: nhs.uk/bowel
- If you're 50 to 74, the NHS will send you a #BowelCancer testing kit. Catching bowel cancer early reduces your chances of getting seriously ill from it. So, don't just leave it in the back of a drawer - send it back today. Find out more: nhs.uk/bowel

Social Media Tags: #SpotItStopIt #BowelCancer #EarlyDiagnosis #CancerAwareness #NHS

Bowel cancer awareness messages

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

Suggested social media posts or SMS text messages: Lynch Syndrome

- Lynch syndrome is an inherited condition that increases the risk of certain cancers, including bowel cancer. An estimated 1 in 400 people in England have Lynch syndrome, but just 5% are aware they are living with the condition. To find out more visit LynchSyndromeUK

Suggested social media posts or text messages: Symptomatic FIT test (poo test)

- If your GP has asked you to complete a FIT Kit (poo test), remember to return this as soon as possible – ideally within 2 days. Catching cancer early, saves lives. For more information visit Thames Valley Cancer Alliance Symptomatic FIT testing #ReturnyourFIT

- It is very important that you do your FIT (poo test) as soon as possible after you receive it – ideally within 2 days. Your doctor needs your results to decide whether to send you for more tests. For more information visit Thames Valley Cancer Alliance Symptomatic FIT testing #ReturnyourFIT

Social Media Tags: #SpotItStopIt #BowelCancer #EarlyDiagnosis #CancerAwareness #NHS

Bowel cancer awareness messages – social media

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

LinkedIn:

Bowel cancer awareness: Spot it, Stop it
Bowel cancer is the 4th most common cancer in the UK and the 2nd biggest cause of cancer death. But - when detected early, it is highly treatable.

Symptoms to look out for:

- bleeding from your bottom
- blood in your poo
- a change in your pooing habits — going often or having diarrhoea or constipation that comes and goes
- losing weight for no clear reason
- feeling very tired all the time
- pain or lump in your tummy

Call to action:

- If you have any of the symptoms above for 3 weeks or more, see your GP. Most people with these symptoms do not have cancer, but it's important to get checked.
- If you have bloody diarrhoea or if your poo is black or dark red, seek urgent help from your GP or NHS111.
- For people aged over 50, complete your NHS free home screening kit (FIT test) as soon as it arrives in the post

This campaign is led by **Thames Valley Cancer Alliance**, supporting NHS efforts to improve cancer outcomes across England. #BowelCancerAwareness #EarlyDetection #NHS #ThamesValleyCancerAlliance



Bowel cancer awareness messages – social media

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

You can use the text below in your social media messages

Facebook:

Bowel cancer awareness: Spot it, Stop it **-** early detection saves lives.

Bowel cancer is the 4th most common cancer in the UK and the 2nd biggest cause of cancer death. But when it's found early, it is highly treatable. That's why spotting symptoms early and taking part in screening matters.

Look out for these symptoms:

- bleeding from your bottom
- blood in your poo
- a change in your pooing habits — going often or having diarrhoea or constipation that comes and goes
- losing weight for no clear reason
- feeling very tired all the time
- pain or lump in your tummy

What you can do:

- If you've had any of these symptoms for 3 weeks or more, contact your GP. Most people with these symptoms won't have cancer—but it's important to get checked.
- If you have bloody diarrhoea or your poo is black or dark red, seek urgent help from your GP or NHS 111.

Screening saves lives:

- If you're aged 50 or over, you'll be sent a free NHS home screening kit (FIT test).
- Complete it as soon as it arrives—it could help detect cancer before symptoms even appear.

This campaign is led by **Thames Valley Cancer Alliance**, supporting NHS efforts to improve cancer outcomes across England. #BowelCancerAwareness #EarlyDetection #NHS #ThamesValleyCancerAlliance

Bowel cancer awareness messages – social media

You can use the text below in your social media messages

Instagram:

Bowel cancer awareness: Spot it, Stop it

Bowel cancer is the 4th most common cancer in the UK and the 2nd biggest cause of cancer death. But when it's found early, it is highly treatable. That's why spotting symptoms early and taking part in screening matters.

Look out for:

- bleeding from your bottom
- blood in your poo
- a change in your pooing habits — going often or having diarrhoea or constipation that comes and goes
- losing weight for no clear reason
- feeling very tired all the time
- pain or lump in your tummy

Don't ignore symptoms
If you've had any of these for 3 weeks or more, contact your GP.
Most people won't have cancer—but it's important to check.

If your poo is black, dark red, or you have bloody diarrhoea, seek urgent help.

Screening saves lives
If you're 50+, you'll be sent a free NHS home test (FIT).
Do it as soon as it arrives.

Early detection can save lives. #BowelCancerAwareness #EarlyDetection #NHSScreening #DoTheTest #CancerAwarenessUK #ThamesValleyCancerAlliance

Bowel cancer awareness social media

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

For Instagram: right-click the image and select save as picture



For Facebook, LinkedIn, X/ Bluesky, Nextdoor:
right click the image and save as picture



Bowel cancer awareness poster & digital screen

- **Poster for digital use:** right click the image and select Save as Picture
- **Poster for printing:** double-click the PDF icon below to open and save the A4 print-ready PDF





Adobe Acrobat Document

Digi screen MP4: double-click the MP4 icon below to open and save as



MP4 File



Bowel cancer awareness – text for newsletters and websites

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

Upload to your website or share in local newsletters:

Option1: Bowel cancer awareness

Bowel Cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK. About 43,000 people are diagnosed with bowel cancer each year. If it is detected early, treatment is more successful and there is a good chance of recovery. It is important that you go to your doctor, with any signs or symptoms so they can help to rule out bowel cancer.
Symptoms to watch for: bleeding from your bottom; blood in your poo; a change in pooing habits; unexplained weight loss; constant tiredness; tummy pain or a lump.
If any symptom lasts **3 weeks or more**, **book a GP appointment** — most symptoms are not cancer, but early checks give the best chance of simple, effective treatment. If you have bloody diarrhoea or if your poo is black or dark red, seek urgent help.
Find out more about bowel cancer signs and symptoms at Symptoms of bowel cancer – NHS or Thames Valley Cancer Alliance.

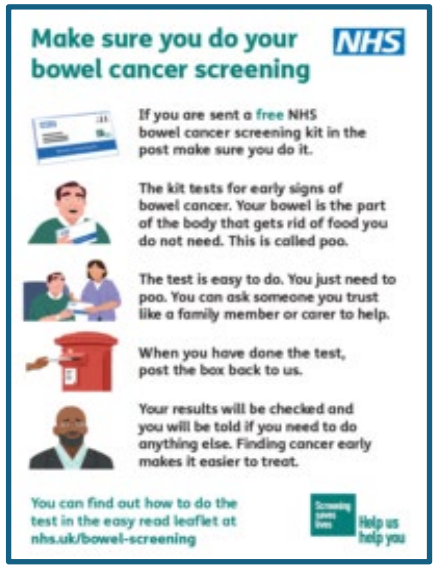
Option 2: Bowel screening

Is your bowel cancer screening kit sitting at the back of a drawer?
If you're 50 to 74, you should have received your NHS bowel cancer screening (FIT) kit through the post. That's because the NHS automatically sends a kit every two years to everyone in that age range.
Out of every 5,000 people who use their test kit, nine turn out to have cancer. But if it's spotted earlier, the chances of recovering from bowel cancer are higher.
The test can be done in the comfort of your home and only needs a tiny sample of poo to test for signs of cancer.
There's no better time to dig out your bowel cancer testing kit that you hid in that bottom drawer or look out for it in the post. Don't put it off.
Find out more about bowel cancer screening at nhs.uk/bowel.
Visit Thames Valley Cancer Alliance for more on bowel cancer.

Bowel cancer awareness and screening posters

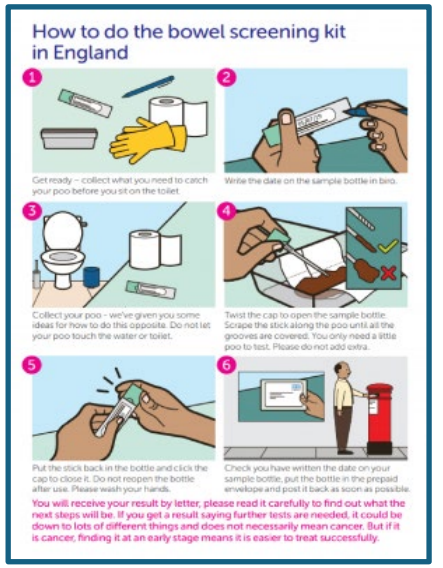
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Click on the image to access resource

Bowel cancer screening accessible resources:

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

LQBTQ Community:



There are a number of resources available for the trans community to help understand more about cancer screening and whether they should be screened:

- NHS population screening: Information for trans and non-binary people
- Cancer Research UK public information to include trans and non-binary
- OUTpatients, the UKs leading LGBTQ+ charity Cancer risk and screening

Languages and accessibility:

- Using your Bowel Cancer Screening Kit is a range of NHS subtitled videos available on Vimeo. The short animation explains how to use a bowel cancer screening kit. Subtitles are available in English, as well as Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Farsi, Gujarati, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi and Urdu. A British Sign Language version is also available.
- The NHS England bowel cancer screening letter is available in 30 languages. Click here to access
- An NHS audio podcast is also available for people with low literacy or visual impairment.

Traveller community:

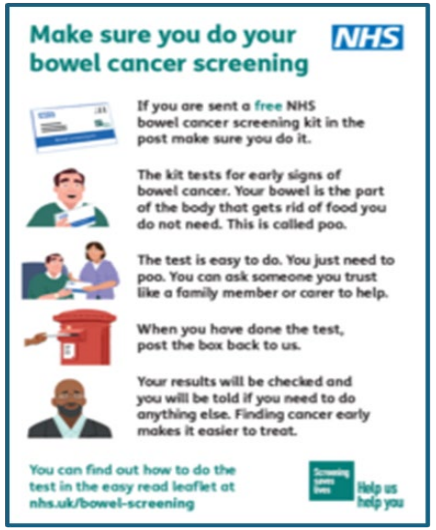
- The Friends, Families and Travellers organisation have worked with the Gypsie and Traveller community to develop a guide to reducing the risk of cancer.
- You can also view Cancer Awareness videos by visiting the Friends, Families and Travellers YouTube Channel, including a video about bowel cancer screening.

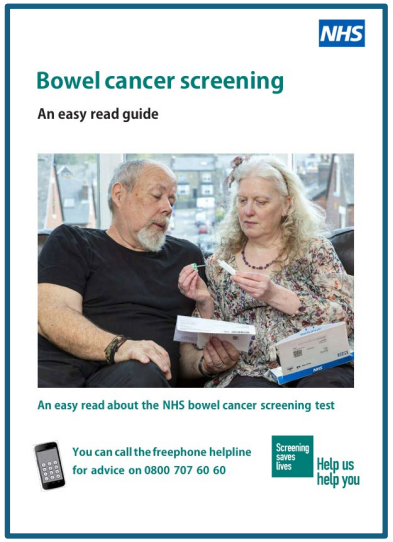


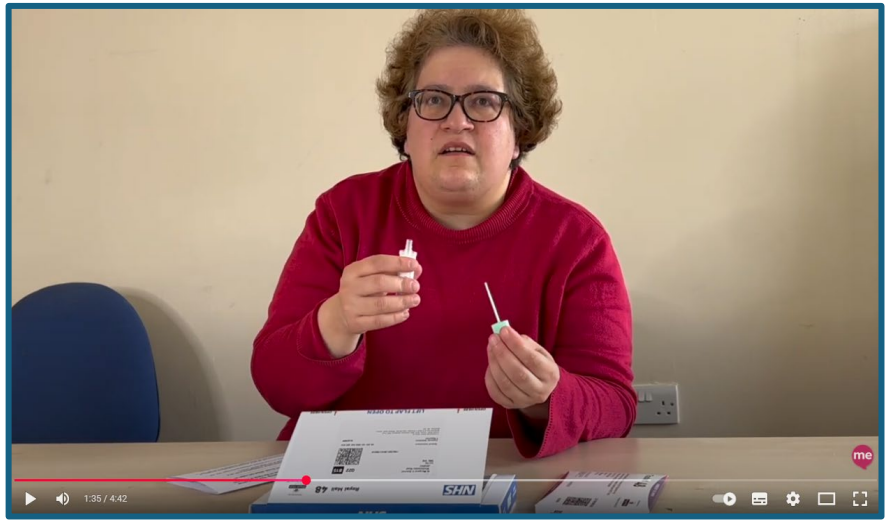
Supporting priority groups: learning disabilities

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

- Evidence shows that eligible people with a learning disability are less likely to complete their bowel cancer screening compared to those without, leaving them at risk of undetected bowel cancer.
- Sutton Mencap in partnership with the NHS has produced a video about bowel screening for people with learning disabilities.
- NHS England have produced an easy read leaflet, and Beyond Words have produced a picture leaflet to support people with learning disabilities to access bowel screening.
- Learning Disability bowel cancer screening videos with subtitles – with thanks to West Yorkshire and Harrogate Cancer Alliance: Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, British Sign Language
- The South East London Cancer Alliance, has collaborated with the Baked Bean Charity and the Guys Cancer Academy, Learning disabilities and cancer educational module. The training module is designed to help healthcare professionals better support people with learning disabilities in accessing cancer care and screening services







Click on the image to access resource

TVCA accessible bowel screening and FIT Test information videos

Thames Valley Cancer Alliance

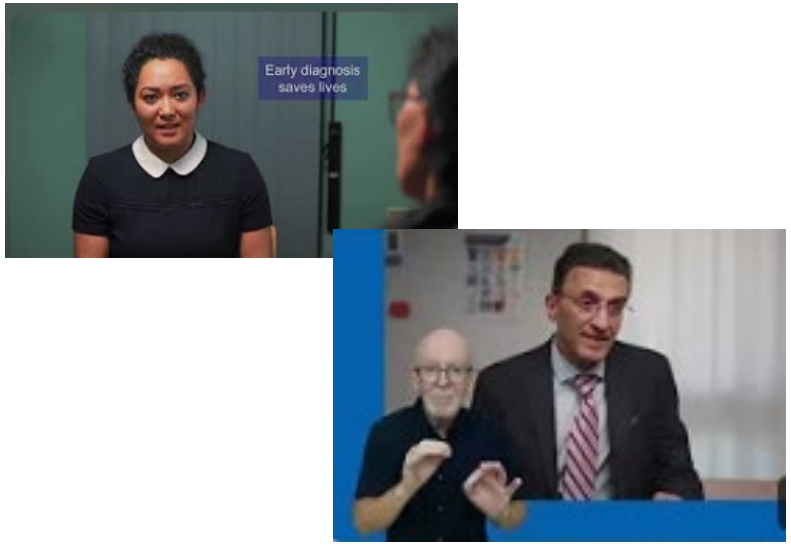
A new set of educational videos has been created to support Primary Care and help patients understand the importance of cancer screening.

The videos explain:

- How to use the symptomatic faecal immunochemical test (FIT)
- Bowel screening

To make this information accessible to more people across the Thames Valley, the videos are available in:

- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Hindi
- Polish
- Gujarati
- Nepali
- Punjabi



- YouTube link to full length videos:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEm1CvSoQcDIhmLz0srHv5m59CkQwMzr5&si=mrpCPP6UQ-1rNQuT

- YouTube link to short reels for social or your waiting room digi screen:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEm1CvSoQcDLK9EiVyfCa1dXWwLs9-Dbj&si=swzLjtSSN2XB4BmL

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEm1CvSoQcDLK9EiVyfCa1dXWwLs9-Dbj)

Bowel cancer screening case study - Stephen

Share Stephen's story to encourage people to take up the offer of screening

I've always been in good health and eaten well so I never thought I'd get cancer. But I did.

When I received an NHS bowel screening home test kit in the post I made sure I completed it.

I assumed everything would be ok… but a couple of weeks later I was invited for a colonoscopy and they found a malignant tumour in my bowel. I couldn't believe it - I had no symptoms.

It turned out I had stage 2 bowel cancer. I was devastated.

Soon after, I had bowel surgery. It was successful and luckily the cancer hadn't spread. I've recovered and have started boxing. I feel as fit as I was before my diagnosis and surgery.

If you do have bowel cancer, finding out early is crucial because the sooner it's found, the better the outcome.

So, if you've got a test kit at home in the back of a drawer, do it today. The chances are there's nothing to worry about. But it might just save your life!"

