

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-668
Ein cyf/Our ref MD/00719/16

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

20 March 2016

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter dated 2 March regarding petition P-04-668.

My earlier response – MD/3536/15 – confirmed the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) provides independent advice to me and the other UK health ministers about population screening.

The UK NSC is recognised as a world leader in its field and provides an advisory function that informs the advice of the Wales Screening Committee. I attach a link to the UK NSC website, which contains further information about the committee, including its membership: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-national-screening-committee-uk-nsc>

The UK NSC requires the highest-quality evidence about population benefits before a new programme can be recommended. This is vitally important to ensure screening programmes do more good than harm and to ensure NHS funding and staff resources are used in the most effective way possible.

Ovarian cancer is a distressing disease; research has helped to make welcome advances in diagnosis and treatment. Early diagnosis of ovarian cancer is both desirable and needed, however, the evidence recently published from the large UKCTOCS trial indicates that the data to date are not sufficient to recommend a national population screening programme in women with no symptoms or relevant family history.

The UK NSC is currently reviewing its recommendation about ovarian cancer screening and is still considering the latest research. The recommendation remains for no population screening at this stage, although as with all emerging research evidence the UK NSC will continue to monitor all emerging evidence.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

It is important women with symptoms which may indicate ovarian cancer are managed promptly and effectively. I have asked Velindre NHS Trust to develop an awareness campaign for ovarian cancer. This was launched on 9 March to coincide with ovarian cancer month and includes the dissemination of symptom awareness leaflets and posters to all GP surgeries in Wales.

The campaign will support women to recognise symptoms and to seek help from their GP, as well as supporting GPs to consider the possibility of ovarian cancer and to undertake appropriate investigations. It will add to the wider work being done by the NHS to implement the new National Institute for Health and Care Excellence suspected cancer referral guidelines and the inclusion of cancer as a national priority area in the GP contract to review cases of lung, gastrointestinal and ovarian cancer to identify opportunities to improve practice.

More widely, the Cancer Implementation Group has prioritised better access to diagnostics; the development of primary care oncology; improving patient experience and innovation of cancer pathways in Wales. The group is investing £1m a year to support these national priorities.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark".

Mark Drakeford AC / AM

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