



VAAC Blog

Barriers to Cervical Cancer Screening – Arun and Chichester



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The common barriers that prevent people from attending cervical cancer screening appointments in the UK are already well-known (see the list compiled by [Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust](#)). However, when the Local Community Networks (LCNs) in Arun and Chichester wanted to find out which of these barriers are most likely to be an issue in our local communities, they commissioned VAAC to conduct some research to explore this.

The research was carried out through the use of a short survey, and responses were collected both electronically and in person, a total of 122 responses altogether. In this blog we are going to look at some of the barriers that were identified and then consider some next steps that could be taken in order to address them.

Issues around booking appointments

The barrier that came up most often from respondents was around the ease of booking appointments. Many said that it was difficult to book appointments as it had to be done via the phone, often with long waiting times, or with phone calls not being answered at all. Online booking facilities were suggested many times in terms of what would make the process easier.

Availability of Appointments

Another barrier that was mentioned multiple times was the lack of appointments that were available to fit around work and childcare responsibilities. In particular, evening and weekend appointments were cited as being unavailable.

Caring responsibilities

The final main theme that was identified was the difficulty that caring responsibilities (both childcare and caring for adult dependents) placed on attending appointments, as well as on finding the time to book appointments. Bringing children to appointments was said to make appointments more difficult and stressful, and help with childcare was suggested as one thing that would be helpful.

Some suggestions to help break down barriers

From this research there were a number of ideas that were identified which might help to remove some of these barriers:

- Relaxation/distraction techniques – there were a number of things suggested that might help people to relax during appointments, for example being allowed to bring a friend/relative along for support, listening to music or podcasts, calming posters or pictures on the ceiling, or even free cupcakes!
- Possible duplication of a butterfly board which has been developed in one of the local surgeries, where everyone that attends a screening appointment gets to pick a coloured butterfly to add to the board. This encourages attendance by creating a community that women can feel a part of.
- Partnership with Family Support Work (FSW) – this local organisation has offered to provide childcare at a local community venue for mobile screening sessions. This would remove the barrier around childcare issues that many respondents mentioned. FSW also have contacts with local families that could be utilised to encourage attendance.
- Specific work with Eastern European communities to explore the reported travel to home countries for screening and to determine if and why these decisions are made.



This research was really useful in identifying which barriers are most likely to stop people from attending Cervical Cancer screening appointments in Arun and Chichester. It will allow the Local Community Networks (LCNs) to consider changes to processes that will encourage more attendance, and work with local surgeries to address any issues that were mentioned.

You can read the full report on this research [here](#).