

# Testing innovative strategies to reduce the social gradient in the uptake of bowel cancer screening: a programme of four qualitatively enhanced randomised controlled trials

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## Plain English summary

### Reducing the social gradient in uptake of bowel cancer screening

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## Plain English summary

**B**owel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer death in the UK. People who are diagnosed early have a better chance of survival. The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme was set up in 2006 to help detect early-stage bowel cancer. The programme invites men and women aged 60–74 years to complete a screening test kit every 2 years.

Only about half of the people offered this screening choose to complete and return the test kit and we know that people in socially disadvantaged groups are less likely to do so. We designed four studies to try to improve uptake of screening among all social groups. Two of these studies tested the effectiveness of information leaflets: one tested an easy to understand version of the screening information leaflet included in the invitation pack sent out by the screening programme and the second provided personal stories describing the screening experience. The third study included an endorsement from the person's general practice on the invitation to participate in screening and the final study made improvements to the reminder letter that the screening programme sends out.

We found that adding leaflets to the usual invitation material did not improve uptake of screening; however, both the general practice endorsement and the improved reminder letter increased screening uptake and at very low cost. Only the improved reminder letter increased uptake among more deprived groups.

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