

People's experiences of NHS Health Checks: exploring awareness and barriers to uptake across Surrey

The NHS Health Check is a free check-up of the heart and blood vessels for those between the ages of 40–74¹. Department of Health and Social Care data shows that, although the uptake rate in Surrey is relatively high, Surrey's invitation rate is the worst compared to our "statistical neighbours" and less than half of the England average. In collaboration with the public health team at Surrey County Council we wanted to explore what impact this is having, including people's awareness of and any barriers to take up of these important checks. We also asked people about their awareness of some of Surrey's public health programmes.

What did we do?

59 people aged 40–74 who were eligible for NHS Health Checks¹ spoke to us at events in Staines, Guildford and Egham or completed a survey. Over half of our sample were under 54 years old.

Key findings

Just under two thirds of the people we spoke to had heard of NHS Health Checks. If respondents were offered an NHS Health Check almost all said they would take it. In line with the data from the Department of Health and Social Care, the key issue is that people are not being invited to attend; less than a third of those we spoke to who were eligible had been invited.

Why are people not taking up NHS Health Checks and what could help?

- The key barrier to attendance or take up was the **lack of invitation**.
- People said that appointments being at an inconvenient time, or an inconvenient location, and not having enough information would also be barriers to attending. Being able to choose a time slot to suit them would therefore help, as would "out of hours" appointments. Phone calls inviting them to attend could also be effective.

¹ People who have specific long-term conditions, which they are regularly monitored for, are not eligible for the NHS health check.

Where would people choose to go for their NHS Health Check?

- Most people said they would be happy to go to their GP practice for the check.
- 8 in 10 expressed an interest in attending their local pharmacy.
- Just over two thirds said they'd be interested in attending a leisure centre.
- Other locations suggested by our respondents included: libraries; social groups; gyms and mosques (all with the proviso of a private space being available).



“ It would be good if they were done in places I was already going (like a mobile unit in the supermarket or high street) with drop-in options.”

Surrey resident



Do people see the value of NHS Health Checks?

We asked how concerned people are about the diseases identified by an NHS Health Check.

- Just under half said they were concerned about stroke
- 4 in 10 said there were concerned about cardiovascular disease
- Just under a quarter were concerned about diabetes and stroke
- Around half said they were concerned about other conditions which they named as cancer, dementia, menopause, osteoporosis.

Despite low levels of concern, half of the people we spoke to said they would contact their GP to request an NHS Health Check as a result of their contact with us.

Awareness of the Know your Numbers campaign

We were asked by the Surrey Health and Wellbeing board to check awareness of Blood Pressure UK's annual campaign, held in September just before our survey launched. This campaign encourages people to get their blood pressure checked and understand what the numbers mean.

Just under half of those we spoke to knew their own blood pressure numbers and less than 2 in 10 had heard of the “know your numbers” blood pressure campaign.

We also asked people about their awareness of Surrey public health programmes. Just under half were aware of the Surrey stop smoking, weight loss and drinking awareness programmes. There was no interest in the stop smoking campaign, and some interest in the weight loss programme.

Uptake of NHS Health Checks in Surrey is low, but this is due to lack of invitations, rather than lack of interest. Holding NHS health checks in places where people are already could help with uptake.