



# Department of Health

From David Mowat MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Health and Care

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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
By email to: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

**22 FEB 2017**

Dear George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 26 January to Jeremy Hunt on behalf of a number of your constituents about bowel cancer screening.

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in all four countries about all aspects of screening policy and supports implementation. Using research evidence, pilot programmes and economic evaluation, it assesses the evidence for programmes against a set of internationally recognised criteria.

In November 2015 the UK NSC recommended that the faecal immunochemical test (FIT) should replace the currently used faecal occult blood test in the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme. The FIT self-sampling kit will be offered to men and women aged 60 to 74 every two years based on evidence that the risk of bowel cancer increases with age, with over 80 per cent of bowel cancers being diagnosed in people who are aged 60 or over. FIT is expected to increase screening uptake by around 10 per cent and result in around 200,000 more people a year being tested, potentially saving hundreds of lives. FIT will be implemented from April 2018.

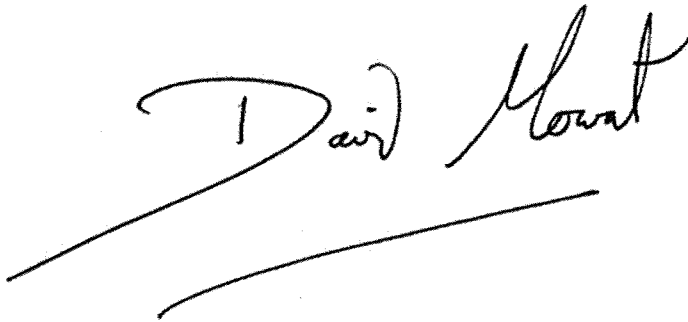
In addition, the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme is currently rolling out bowel scope screening (BSS) – a one-off examination that will play a significant role in preventing bowel cancer. Both men and women will be invited for BSS around the time of their 55th birthday. If people are not screened at 55, they can request BSS up to the age of 59. BSS finds and removes any small bowel growths (polyps) that could eventually turn into cancer.

Evidence shows that men and women aged 55-64 attending a one-off bowel scope screening test for bowel cancer could reduce their individual mortality from the disease by 43 per cent (31 per cent on a whole-population basis) and reduce their

individual incidence of bowel cancer by 33 per cent (23 per cent on a whole-population basis). The best way to reduce deaths from bowel cancer is to combine the BSS test with regular screening tests for blood in a stool sample from the age of 60.

We believe the biggest impact we can have on saving lives from bowel cancer in England is implementing FIT in 2018 and the current roll-out of BSS to all men and women aged 55. Anyone over the age of 74 can self-refer themselves into the screening programme every two years.

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Mowat". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'D' and a long horizontal line underneath the name.

**DAVID MOWAT**