1. Title

Bowel Screening Standards

2. Healthcare Improvement Scotland standards and indicators

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) is the national health and social care improvement organisation for Scotland. It provides the expertise and resources to co-produce health and social care standards which are developed, informed and shaped by those who commission, deliver and use services.

The role of standards is to:

- provide a statement(s) of an expected level of service which demonstrates delivery of person-centred, safe and effective healthcare,
- promote understanding, comparison and improvement of care, and
- support national consistency and/or local improvement.

3. Scottish Bowel Screening Programme

3.1 Bowel Cancer in Scotland

Bowel cancer (also referred to as colorectal cancer) is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in men and women in Scotland. It is more common in people over 50 years of age, especially men. Around 4,000 people are newly diagnosed with bowel cancer every year. Scotland has a higher rate of bowel cancer in both sexes than most other Western countries.¹

3.2 Scottish Bowel Screening Programme (SBoSP)

Bowel screening is the most effective way to find pre-cancerous signs or early stage cancer in men and women who otherwise have no symptoms. Investigation and
treatment of bowel cancer at an early stage can mean better chances of survival.\textsuperscript{1, 2} There is good evidence to suggest that 9 out of 10 people diagnosed with stage 1 bowel cancer\textsuperscript{3} will survive five years or more after diagnosis.\textsuperscript{4}

The SBoSP invites all eligible people aged 50-74 to complete a bowel screening test every two years.\textsuperscript{5, 6} People 75 or over can complete a bowel screening test every 2 years by requesting a test kit.\textsuperscript{6} The test, which participants do at home, looks for small amounts of blood in bowel motions. While blood can be present in bowel motions for a number of reasons, the presence of blood may indicate a higher chance of bowel cancer.\textsuperscript{4} The blood may be unseen to the human eye but the test can pick it up.

Most people (around 97\%)\textsuperscript{7} have a bowel screening result which requires no further investigation. If the amount of blood found in the bowel motion is above a specified SBoSP threshold, the person is referred to their local NHS board for an assessment and, where appropriate, offered a colonoscopy as the first line of investigation.\textsuperscript{1} A colonoscopy enables examination of any abnormal areas within the rectum or bowel that could be the result of cancer.

In Scotland, the incidence of cancer is higher in the most deprived areas. Poor outcomes for many people living in Scotland with bowel cancer can be attributed to the health inequality they experience. Cancer mortality rates are higher in groups that experience economic disadvantage.\textsuperscript{8} The Scottish Government has set out an ambition to encourage and support people to reduce their risk of cancer by living healthier lives. This will be achieved through a focus on reducing health inequalities.\textsuperscript{8} Equitable access to bowel screening and early diagnosis and treatment plays an essential role in supporting this ambition.

National Services Division provides national coordination for the SBoSP and commissions the Scottish Bowel Screening Centre from NHS Tayside. Key performance indicators have been developed by the SBoSP to monitor and evaluate its impact. Information Services Division (ISD) reports on these for a two year screening period.\textsuperscript{1} (Please note that ISD will become part of Public Health Scotland (PHS), a new national public health agency, from 1 April 2020).

HIS supports NHSScotland’s screening programmes through developing new and, where appropriate, revising existing standards, as well as undertaking external quality assurance of the individual screening programmes.

Bowel screening standards were originally published in 2015. These standards were identified for revision and accepted on to the HIS work programme in October 2019.
4. The scope of the standards

4.1 Population that will be covered
- All individuals eligible for bowel screening.\textsuperscript{5, 6}

4.2 Healthcare setting
- All bowel screening programme service providers and bowel screening programme support services with responsibility for delivering bowel screening in Scotland.

4.3 Areas for standards development
a. Proposed areas in scope:
- Leadership and governance
- Information and support
- Call-recall
- Uptake
- Bowel screening test result
- Bowel screening laboratory process
- Pre-diagnostic assessment
- Diagnostics
- Histopathology
- Post-diagnostic management

Identifying, addressing and monitoring health inequalities in screening, specifically, inequality and inequity in access and uptake to the bowel screening programme are key areas of focus for the standards that will be included, where appropriate.

In addition, safeguarding, audit, quality assurance, and education and training will be woven throughout the standards.

b. Areas out of scope:
- development of HIS quality or key performance indicators
- implementation of the standards – this is for local determination.

5. Related development sources: Key documents, policies, standards, guidelines and work programmes relating to the bowel screening standards
a. Key sources (not exhaustive):
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland. \textit{Quality of Care Approach. 2017}
6. **Timelines**

   The development phase of the bowel screening standards development project will begin in March 2020. The standards are due for completion in December 2020.

7. **Proposed development group specialists**

   The proposed specialists to be represented during the bowel screening standards’ development process are:

   - Bowel Screening Board Coordinator/Consultant in Public Health
   - Scottish Bowel Screening Services Manager
   - Director of Public Health
   - Associate Service Manager – Scottish Bowel Screening Centre
   - National Clinical Director
   - ISD representative
   - HIS Quality Assurance Directorate representative
   - Medical Director
   - General Practitioner
   - Consultant Clinical Scientist
   - NHS Health Scotland representative
   - NSD representative
   - Patient representative/Public Partner
   - Scottish Government representative
   - Third Sector representative
   - Consultant Colorectal Surgeon
   - Colorectal Lead Nurse Specialist
   - Nurse Endoscopist
   - Consultant Gastroenterologist

b. Related Healthcare Improvement Scotland guidance:

   - Healthcare Improvement Scotland. **SIGN 126 Diagnosis and management of colorectal cancer. 2015**
   - Healthcare Improvement Scotland. **Bowel Screening Standards. 2015**
8. Contact us

For any enquiries please contact:

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For more information about HIS, visit our website:

www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org


