

Advice on making a best interest decision

If the woman has not understood enough to make her own decision on cervical screening you need to make a best interest decision for her.

- To make a best interest decision you need to have a discussion with people who know her well. These would usually be her family and/or carers. Include the woman in your discussion as much as possible.
- Discussions do not have to be face to face, opinions on what is in her best interest can be collected through telephone calls.
- If no-one is sure how the woman will cope with cervical screening, you can attempt to do the test to see how she responds. The test can be stopped if she shows signs of distress.
- For further guidance contact the health facilitation team on 0300 0266 818.

Also consider

- If professionals, families and carers cannot or do not agree on what is in the woman's best interest you should consider obtaining the opinion of an independent advocate. The IMCA service can be contacted on 0191 281 7322.
- Review the woman's past screening history. If she has previously attended screening, this implies that she once felt it was important. This knowledge could influence you and others when making a best interest decision for her.
- Consider her beliefs and/or wishes, which could influence a best interest decision for her.
- A best interest decision is based on your reasonable belief at that time.

When a woman cannot manage cervical screening

When a woman cannot manage to have cervical screening, you must consider other ways of keeping her safe from cervical cancer. Some less restrictive options include:-

- If the woman needs to have a general anaesthetic in the future it could be in her best interest to have a cervical screening test done at the same time. Document this in the medical history computer entry, as a high priority, and review the decision if an opportunity arises.
- Education for the woman, her family and/or carers about [the signs and symptoms of cervical cancer](#) would be considered best practice. This is a less restrictive option than screening. Every time a best interest decision is made that cervical screening is not appropriate, education should be given. This ensures that all family and/or carers have up to date information.

Making a permanent decision to remove a woman from the cervical screening programme is not best practice. Any such request may trigger a response from Public Health England for further information.