

# P-06-1562 Improve breast screening uptake for women in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 12 Ionawr 2026  
Petitions Committee | 12 January 2026

**Reference:** RS25/12881

## Introduction

Petition Number: [P-06-1562](#)

Petition title: Improve breast screening uptake for women in Wales

Text of petition:

Breast screening saves lives from breast cancer. Yet targets for women screened in Wales are being missed. In 2022-23, only 69.5% of women invited for screening attended their appointment - below the 70% minimum standard and the 80% target.

If the 80% target was met, 15,871 more women would have been screened and an estimated 154 more breast cancers detected. Welsh Government must support Public Health Wales and Breast Test Wales to improve breast screening uptake, and address inequalities.

Welsh Government should commit to improving breast screening uptake in Wales to consistently achieve the 70% minimum standard for uptake and reach the 80% target.



Welsh Government should also commit to addressing inequalities in access to breast screening, which impact minority ethnic communities, those of socio-economic disadvantage and underserved groups. Public Health Wales' Screening Equity Strategy 2022-25 ends this year.

To improve uptake and address inequalities, Welsh Government should support, resource and enable Breast Test Wales and Public Health Wales to:

- Deliver a breast screening awareness campaign, focusing on low-uptake areas and communities
- Provide more convenient, flexible routes into breast screening services, including multiple options to arrange appointments
- Improve data reporting and accountability by regularly publishing uptake data, including for minority ethnic and underserved groups

These actions should be included in a new Screening Equity Strategy.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

# 1. Background

Breast Test Wales, run by Public Health Wales (PHW), is the national programme for breast cancer screening. It aims to reduce deaths from breast cancer through early detection.

Screening involves a mammogram (an X-ray of the breasts). If any abnormalities are detected, the person is invited to an assessment clinic for further tests.

- Women aged 50 to 70 who are registered with a GP in Wales are invited for breast screening every three years.
- Those over 70 are not routinely invited but can request an appointment from Breast Test Wales.
- Screening is not offered to people under 50 because evidence shows the programme mainly benefits those over 50. Anyone with symptoms or concerns about their family history should speak to their doctor.

Transgender and non-binary people may also need breast screening. Whether they receive an automatic invitation depends on how their gender is recorded with their GP. If they are not invited, they can ask their GP or contact the screening programme to be included.

Eligible individuals are offered screening at either a local mobile unit or at one of the centres in Llandudno, Wrexham, Swansea, or Cardiff.

## **Screening activity and uptake**

According to the latest Breast Test Wales annual report, the number of screening invitations increased in 2022–23 to address pandemic-related delays. While meeting uptake and coverage standards remained challenging, cancer detection rates showed improvement.

In 2023–24, Breast Test Wales focused on improving timeliness, reducing waits for assessment clinics, and restoring the 36-month screening cycle.

Public Health Wales' inequity report (December 2024) showed that uptake in 2021–22 was 70%, meeting the national standard. However, rates varied by health board - from 68.1% in Cwm Taf Morgannwg to 72.5% in Swansea Bay - and by local authority, with Anglesey as low as 40%. Significant disparities remain, linked to geography and deprivation, despite recovery efforts that restored invitation numbers after COVID.

## 2. Welsh Government action

In its response to the Petitions Committee, the Welsh Government acknowledges concerns about breast screening uptake, which varies by region, age, and socioeconomic background. It cites barriers including lack of awareness, anxiety, cultural and language issues, access challenges, and misinformation.

To improve uptake, the Welsh Government says it is working with PHW on targeted outreach in low-uptake areas, including training community champions, engaging community groups, and delivering awareness campaigns. The response highlights initiatives such as a 'what to expect' video for first-time attendees, social media campaigns, GP information packs, and flexible mobile screening units located in accessible sites. While online booking is not yet available, the Welsh Government indicates this may be considered in future. It also notes that PHW is addressing delays in data reporting and developing the next Screening Equity Strategy, which will include factors such as ethnicity.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

There was no committee work on breast screening during the Sixth Senedd, although cervical screening was considered in the Health and Social Care Committee's [report on gynaecological cancers](#).

The issue has been raised through several Written Questions, including:

- [WQ95761](#) (February 2025): The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care confirmed that PHW and Breast Test Wales regularly review and implement measures to improve uptake, addressing barriers through its Screening Engagement Team.
- [WQ96723](#) (June 2025): The Cabinet Secretary said that PHW plans to publish a refreshed Screening Equity Strategy in 2025-26 to tackle inequalities, working with health boards and third-sector partners. (At the time of writing, this strategy has not been published).

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.