

Useful advice for making a best interest decision

If you have decided that your patient 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 you can.
- This does not have to be a face to face meeting as opinions on what is in her best interest can be collected through telephone calls.
- If no-one is sure how she will cope, you can attempt to do the test to see how she responds. The test can be stopped if she shows signs of distress.

Alternative support routes

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

Failure to engage in screening

When a woman cannot manage to have the test, 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 and revise your decision should such an opportunity arise.
- 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 at that time, education should be given. This ensures that all carers have up to date information. Family and carer details can be checked at the annual learning disability health checks.

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.