

Breast Cancer Screening

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

I thank the Secretary of State for the commitments and actions he has set out. Colleagues across the House will be thinking of the hundreds of thousands of women not called for their final screening test. They now need consistent, high-quality, evidence-based guidance so that they can make an informed choice about whether to take up the offer of screening. There is much material available setting out pictorially and clearly how they can weigh up the risks and benefits. Will he assure the House not only that a helpline will be in place but that it will be backed up with high-quality material available directly to patients and their GPs, many of whom will be directly counselling women following this news?

Jeremy Hunt Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Yes, and I can reassure my hon. Friend that GPs will be briefed and that people will be referred for additional support to clinically trained staff at Macmillan Cancer Support and Breast Cancer Care. We have to be transparent with patients, however, about the absence of a clear clinical consensus on the efficacy of scanning for women in their 70s. The fairest thing is to explain that different people have different views and allow them to come to an individual choice, and that is what we are doing. It will of course cause considerable distress to those given that dilemma, but if anyone wants a scan, we will do that scan.