

12 November 2009

Press Release

Freetest.me Online Chlamydia Testing Could Save the NHS Millions of Pounds

New figures from the National Audit Office reveal the Chlamydia Screening Programme is not cost-effective. However, there is compelling evidence that most NHS Primary Care Trusts who are responsible for delivering the service are still failing to use the most cost effective option at their disposal.

With routine use of the internet from social networking to shopping among the target ages of 15-24, it's no surprise that young people prefer to order goods and services online. Research evidences that this is particularly true for Chlamydia testing, where a free discreet and confidential postal service is the preferred method of testing. It's evident that under 25s would prefer to test at home using a sleek and user friendly experience they can trust.

When asked, Neil Cooper of freetest.me, the UK's leading online provider of Chlamydia Screening to the NHS said "We currently have 30 of the 152 PCTs using our service, but we are genuinely baffled that all PCTs aren't using our online service to increase screening in their regions".

The NAO reports that the NHS are spending anywhere between £33 and £255 (on average £56) to test a single patient. In contrast, freetest.me figures reveal they cost the NHS on average £21.14 per test – less than half what's currently being paid. If the freetest.me service could be offered nationally, the NHS and taxpayers savings would run into millions of pounds each year.

Perhaps worse is that in addition to this, the same PCTs are also failing to reach their targets for the number of tests they perform. Neil Cooper continued: "Thousands of responsible young people hit the freetest.me website every week looking to request a free test for Chlamydia, yet with only 30 of England's PCTs using the service we've already had to turn away over 80,000 visitors to other less effective testing services which cost the NHS around twice as much. It's barmy".

The NAO recommended that the Department of Health reviews the provision of a national online screening service, and highlights that such a service would benefit from numerous economies of scale. Neil Cooper commented: "We are pleased that the NAO report has made this recommendation, and as we already have the unique experience of offering such a service we would be keen to explore rolling the service out nationally".



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Notes to Editors

Press release for publication post 12st November 2009.

The NAO report essentially identifies a fragmented and therefore expensive service, and recommends a national 'remote testing' service. This is precisely the concept freetest.me presented to the DoH/HPA/NCSP over 18 months ago. At that time, freetest.me specifically identified the numerous economies of scale now highlighted by the NAO today. Instead, the national vision was rejected, and freetest.me were told to approach the 152 individual PCTs directly.

The freetest.me service was setup to provide a one-stop solution for PCTs to offer cost-effective online testing. The service is all-inclusive, from marketing to kit dispatch and laboratory costs, and on average costs participating PCTs £21.14 per completed test (per PCT averages range from £19.17 to £21.76 per test).

The freetest.me website, now ranked #1 in Google for 'chlamydia test' and many related searches has received over 170,000 visitors since its launch in January this year.

Press Resources

<http://freetest.me.uk/press>

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