

MAMMOGRAPHY SERVICES IN ARGYLL AND CLYDE

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Argyll and Clyde Health Board, in the west of Scotland, covers an area of 3,500 square miles, and includes 26 inhabited islands. In Argyll and Clyde, the NHS Breast Cancer Screening Programme began in 1990. Women are screened on mobile mammography units. Concerns that a programme developed in other areas might require amendment for use in isolated rural areas prompted a review of attendance and consumer satisfaction of four islands (Islay, Jura, Mull and Iona).

A prospective postal questionnaire survey of the 313 women invited for screening on Islay and Jura was conducted, with a response rate of 76% (differential response rate 84% for those who subsequently participated in screening, 55% for those who did not participate). Compared to participants, non-participants tended to be older ($p < 0.05$) and to live further from the screening site ($p < 0.001$). Attendance also varied by time of appointment, with afternoon appointments being poorly attended.

Of the participants on Islay and Jura, 195 (80%) were either interviewed in person (162/195) or completed questionnaires (33/195) about their experience of screening. On Mull and Iona, 181 women (82% of participants) completed post-screening questionnaires. Women were satisfied with the facilities, and with their interactions with radiographers. Despite high overall satisfaction, there was disquiet about pain during mammography with 27% on Islay and Jura, and 67% on Mull and Iona reporting pain or severe discomfort. Women wanted clearer explanations of the need for breast compression. Participants also made numerous suggestions about possible changes to the appointment system.

The findings demonstrated that small scale local work is necessary to fine tune the national programmes for use in rural areas. Using a combination of postal questionnaires and personal interviews allowed qualitative information to be collected, and to be used to inform Health Board planning. The populations on islands can have markedly different views from those on even neighbouring islands, and local planning is essential if national programmes are to have any chance of success.