

23 July 2025

Miss K J Gomersal LLB HM
Senior Coroner – Cumbria
Via e mail hmcroner@cumbria.gov.uk

Dear Miss K J Gomersal,

Re: Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening – Re-invitation to screening inquest to the death of Mr John Joseph Burn (06.02.53 – 14.01.24) NHS 448 834 0911 (your ref 10870084)

Thank you for your letter dated 11 July 2025 regarding the inquest into the death of Mr Burn, in which you queried whether the NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme has a mechanism for re-inviting patients who opt out of surveillance.

AAA screening guidance details the importance of providing sufficient information to help individuals make an informed decision about withdrawing from the programme, and the ability to return to it at any time. Individuals are encouraged to remain within the recall system and to decline their next appointment rather than withdraw permanently. During the Covid-19 pandemic, guidance for AAA screening services was produced to support individuals who may have been anxious about attending, allowing them to defer, rather than opt out or not attend, their next screening.

The AAA screening programme uses a self-completed opt out form which advises that completion will prevent receipt of future invitations or reminders. Individuals are reminded that they are able to opt back in at any time by contacting their GP or the local screening programme. GPs are informed of their patients who opt out of AAA screening or who do not attend their appointments.

It is reassuring to note that from 2018 to 2025 the total number of opt outs each year from AAA surveillance screening in England has remained consistent. COVID did not have an impact on the numbers opting out of the system, although some may have deferred their appointments.

Screening Year	Total Declines
2018-19	116
2019-20	99
2020-21	90
2021-22	101

2022-23	112
2023-24	106
2024-25	94

In the last annual report for the AAA programme in England (1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024) there were 15,300 men on surveillance. Approximately 12,400 of those were on annual surveillance, and 2,900 on quarterly surveillance. Over that time period less than 1% of men opted out.

In England the NHS AAA screening programme does not proactively contact individuals who have opted out, due to not having the basis to do so from an information governance perspective, and noting screening is a choice where an individual's decision must be respected.

Additional information is available on:

[Opting out of screening - GOV.UK](#)

[AAA screening: programme guidance - GOV.UK](#)

[Find abdominal aortic aneurysm screening services - NHS](#)

I welcome the importance of AAA screening being highlighted and am happy for this response to be published on your website.

Best wishes,

Prof Sir Mike Richards
Chair of the UK National Screening Committee

Cc: UKNSC