



14 July 2020

Deputy Sorca Clarke  
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

**PQ13590/20: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Longford that have had cancer screening appointments cancelled due to Covid-19; and the additional resources which will be made available to ensure these vital and potentially lifesaving programmes can adequately deal with the additional numbers on their waiting lists.**

**PQ13591/20: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Westmeath that have had cancer screening appointments cancelled due to Covid-19; and the additional resources which will be made available to ensure these vital and potentially lifesaving programmes can adequately deal with the additional numbers on their waiting lists.**

Dear Deputy Clarke,

I refer to the above two Parliamentary Questions.

The National Screening Service (NSS) paused its screening programmes in March 2020 on Public Health advice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CervicalCheck began a phased restart on 06 July 2020. BowelScreen and BreastCheck are projected to resume in September/October.

### **BowelScreen**

BowelScreen would expect to have issued 104,150 invitations for screening from the start of January to the end of May 2020. The actual number of invitations issued so far this year was 38,603, leaving a shortfall of 65,547. We are not in a position to advise what proportions of these invitations are due to people in Longford or Westmeath because invitations are linked to capacity within endoscopy units which can serve multiple counties.”

### **BreastCheck**

Our mobile BreastCheck unit completed screening in Longford on 31 January 2020 and is not due to return until approximately October 2021. Approximately 700 appointments were cancelled in Westmeath when screening was paused at the height of the pandemic.

### **CervicalCheck**

Around 100,000 women were due cervical screening until CervicalCheck resumed on July 6. We do not have a report that pulls together invitation letters on a county basis, so a breakdown showing how many of these women are in Longford and Westmeath is not held by NSS.

In relation to waiting lists, invitations and reminders for people who are now overdue screening are being sent on a phased basis, in line with programme prioritisation to facilitate a safe restart. We are currently assessing capacity at our screening, laboratory and hospital facilities to understand the impact of new processes and procedures, and how they will affect the throughput of our programme participants.

Teach Óstaí an Rí, 200 Sráid Parnell, Baile Átha Cliath D01 A3Y8. King's Inn House, 200 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, D01 A3Y8.  
☎ 353 1 865 9300 ✉ [info@screeningservice.ie](mailto:info@screeningservice.ie) [www.screeningservice.ie](http://www.screeningservice.ie)





An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

Screening is a population health measure for people who are presumed healthy and do not have symptoms. The aim of a population screening programme is to reduce the incidence of disease in a population. Screening is not a diagnostic tool and no screening test is completely accurate. All screening programmes are limited by the sensitivity of the test which is the ability to detect those with the disease in a population (true positives). Screening programmes are likewise limited by the specificity of the test which is the ability to detect those who are free of the disease (true negatives). Therefore, a negative test result is not a guarantee that a person is clear of the condition or that they won't develop the condition between screening appointments.

The NSS continues to encourage all people who are between screening appointments, or waiting for rescheduled appointments, to be aware of, and act upon, any symptoms associated with the conditions for which they are being screened. We ask that those people contact their GP, who will arrange appropriate follow-up care.

For other queries participants can call the Freephone information line on 1800 45 45 55, email [info@screeningservice.ie](mailto:info@screeningservice.ie) or contact their clinic directly.

I trust this information is of assistance, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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Fiona Murphy  
Chief Executive  
National Screening Service

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coik  
The National Breast Screening Programme



AN CLÁR NAISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERIBHEACS  
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Putóige  
The National Bowel Screening Programme



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Netim de Diabaitigh  
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme