



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

02 November 2021

Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne TD
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ51076.21 To ask the Minister for Health the plans that have been made to screen the women who otherwise missed a BreastCheck screening over the course of the past 19 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question. Also, I refer to my response on 18 October 2021 in which I discussed aspects of the BreastCheck programme in detail. Hence, this response may seem brief, but I suggest it is read in conjunction with my previous letter.

Similar to other breast screening programmes internationally we have restarted women on their screening journeys since recommencing screening in October 2020.

Appointments in this screening round (where we normally invite women for screening once every two years) are delayed by up to a year. This means that if a woman was due to be screened in 2020, we are aiming to invite her in 2021; if she was due to be screened in 2021, we will now aim to invite her in 2022. We are prioritising women who are due screening longest and women who are new to screening.

During this time, Ireland will be in line with England, which screens women every three years. However, we aim to return to screening women every two years as soon as possible. This is dependent on the situation with COVID-19 and restrictions continuing to ease.

We continue to increase capacity in our breast screening service with measures that include a new text messaging system to manage appointments; three new mobile units coming on-stream; asking staff to work additional hours; and recruiting staff.

At all times we have advised women and continue to do so, that screening is for healthy women. If a woman has a symptom about which she is concerned, she should contact her GP for assessment and referral to the symptomatic breast cancer service.

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

Fiona Murphy
Chief Executive
National Screening Service

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