

11 March 2022

Deputy Duncan Smith
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Our Ref: HM/Communications

PQ11703/22 and PQ11706/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons who received a CervicalCheck exam by month in each of the years 2018 to 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ11705/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons who received a BowelScreen exam by month in each of the years 2018 to 2021, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Questions, which I intend to answer as one. I trust you are agreeable with this approach.

CervicalCheck:

We are pleased to report that by the end of 2021 we had screened the same number of women and people with a cervix as in any other two-year period. CervicalCheck is up-to-date with invites for screening.

We continue to emphasise the importance of being symptom aware for all of our screening services. We encourage anyone with symptoms to contact their GP who will give them appropriate advice on follow-up care.

The following table highlights the number of people screened from January 2018 to December 2021.

No. of unique women who have had one or more screening tests in a primary care setting	2018*	2019	2020 (see note 1)	2021
Jan	27,172	19,280	21,423	11,809
Feb	30,261	19,828	14,319	28,495
March	21,874	17,142	3,263	48,675
April	23,788	16,748	1	44,694
May	57,700	17,297	101	28,953
June	32,959	15,145	285	21,931
July	29,146	17,143	6,767	24,435
August	27,353	17,222	11,816	24,138
Sept	24,104	18,300	16,315	26,399
Oct	26,713	18,936	19,396	21,287
Nov	27,954	18,226	28,563	24,093
Dec	13,137	11,048	20,779	13,582
TOTAL	342,161	206,315	143,028	318,491

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* Year women availed of the offer of a free out-of-schedule screening test.

Note 1: Cervical screening was paused during this period.

The CervicalCheck programme was paused during April, May and June 2020 on public health advice because of the situation with COVID-19. Despite the many restrictions the pandemic placed on our operations, the programme is now up to date with invites for screening.

It is important to note that CervicalCheck invites people to attend for screening. They are not provided with an appointment time as in BreastCheck, or issued a FIT kit as with BowelScreen. Women may attend their appointment whenever they choose and with a registered sample taker of their choice.

BowelScreen

The National Screening Service's (NSS) four programmes including, BowelScreen, were paused in March 2020. This move was taken on public health advice due to the situation with COVID-19. The pause in screening was put in place to protect participants and staff by complying with social distancing guidelines. In addition, the HSE temporarily redeployed staff and resources to the response to COVID-19. However, clinical staff continued to work within the programmes.

BowelScreen restarted issuing invites for screening to eligible people on a phased basis on 04 August 2020.

People are eligible to take part in the BowelScreen programme once they reach the age of 60. Once the person gives consent they are issued with a FIT kit (screening) which is a test done at home and returned by post at their convenience.

People with a 'not normal' result are offered a colonoscopy. The programme continues to monitor colonoscopy capacity closely and invitations to participate are being issued relative to each unit's capacity.

The following table highlights the number of people who completed a satisfactory FIT kit test from January 2018 to December 2021.

No. of clients who have completed a satisfactory FIT kit test	2018	2019	2020	2021
Jan	9,925	9,486	6,748	8,219
Feb	9,122	7,104	7,730	4,273
March	6,704	7,917	6,612	7,458
April	12,247	9,088	526	11,240
May	12,690	12,511	149	10,644
June	9,231	10,946	83	8,469
July	8,432	12,759	1,057	8,629
August	8,408	11,809	1,806	6,822
Sept	7,206	9,724	2,618	5,785

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Oct	7,547	10,408	7,083	6,374
Nov	8,349	12,884	9,347	7,331
Dec	5,555	8,088	6,157	6,285
TOTAL	105,416	122,724	49,916	91,529

The impact of COVID-19 and the cyber attack means invitations in our current screening round (where we normally invite people for screening once every two years) are delayed by approximately a year. This means if they were due to be invited to be screened in 2021, we aim to invite them in 2022. We are prioritising inviting people who have been waiting for screening longest, and new entrants to the screening programme.

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

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy
Chief Executive
National Screening Service

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