



21 November 2022

Deputy Cathal Crowe  
[cathal.crowe@oireachtas.ie](mailto:cathal.crowe@oireachtas.ie)

Our Ref: HM/Communications

**PQ55361/22: To ask the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 302 of 27 October 2022, the fully-staffed annual testing capacity of the new national cervical screening laboratory; and the tendering process which prevents the HSE from disclosing the total cost of sending samples abroad for testing in each of the past five years.**

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

### **National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL)**

The NCSL is being developed by the HSE and the CWIUH to become a national centre of excellence for cervical screening. It will be commissioned by Ireland's cervical screening programme, CervicalCheck, to process women's cervical screening samples. It is expected to be operating by year-end.

The new laboratory is designed to become CervicalCheck's main provider of cervical screening laboratory services, processing the majority of these samples. Recruitment of skilled staff will be a top priority for several years as the NCSL increases the number of CervicalCheck samples it receives. A secondary laboratory contractor will remain necessary to guard against the issues which can result from dependence on a single supplier.

All cervical screening samples go to a quality-assured laboratory provider. The quality assurance requirements and standards for the cervical screening programme are based on European guidance, as set out in the European guidelines for quality assurance in cervical cancer screening, and our Standards for Quality Assurance in Cervical Screening.

Two quality-assured laboratories process all CervicalCheck tests. They are Quest Diagnostics in the US, and the CWIUH in Dublin. They perform HPV primary testing with reflex cytology.

### **Tendering process**

CervicalCheck is in the process of procuring additional laboratory services under an EU tender process for "The provision of HPV primary screening and secondary screening by way of liquid-based cytology for CervicalCheck the national cervical screening programme in Ireland". As CervicalCheck is currently engaged in a competitive tender process for laboratory services cost information is commercially sensitive.

### **Cervical screening**

CervicalCheck - the national cervical screening programme, plays an important role in preventing cervical cancer in Ireland. Our most recent data shows a continued decreasing incidence in the number of women who develop cervical cancer, with a 2.8% annual percentage decrease from 2010-2018. In the first ten years of the programme it provided almost 3.2 million cervical screening tests, and detected over 115,000 abnormalities (including 64,000 high grade abnormalities), many of which could have developed into

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

cervical cancer if not detected through screening.

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

Yours sincerely,

---

Fiona Murphy,  
Chief Executive.

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 www.screeningservice.ie



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála  
National Screening Service

