



06 December 2022

Deputy David Cullinane
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Our Ref: HM/Communications

PQ57590/22: To ask the Minister for Health the number of cancer screenings conducted by the HSE by type, by location for each month to date in 2022, in tabular form; the number of screenings which have been outsourced by type, indicating for domestic and abroad; the number of samples which have been analysed by HSE services; the number of samples outsourced for analysis by provider; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

BreastCheck

BreastCheck invites eligible women aged from 50 to 69 years, for breast screening on an area-by-area basis every two years. We call this process a screening 'round'. Our mobile units move around over the course of each round depending on the size of the population that is eligible for screening in each area. The BreastCheck mobile stays in location until all eligible women who are in the catchment area for that mobile unit have been invited.

The first invitation will depend on when screening is available in a woman's area. This is normally within two years of her 50th birthday. BreastCheck is a clinically delivered service and all aspects of the BreastCheck screening programme are provided by BreastCheck staff within the Republic of Ireland.

Along with many public services, BreastCheck was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme was paused for several months in 2020 and 2021, and because of this, it is taking longer to get through the current screening round.

BreastCheck is back to nearly normal numbers attending for screening daily, despite extra COVID-19 measures still being in place. We aim to be back to two-yearly screens by autumn 2023. This is dependent on meeting the challenge of staff recruitment and retention.

The total number of persons screened by BreastCheck is shown in the table above. Verified data for 2022 is not yet available.

| 2022* | Number of people screened |
|----------|---------------------------|
| January | 10,561 |
| February | 12,886 |
| March | 12,986 |
| April | 11,322 |
| May | 15,975 |
| June | 14,430 |
| July | 10,607 |
| August | 12,668 |

*Provisional data from the beginning of January to the end of August 2022, and subject to change.

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CervicalCheck

CervicalCheck offers free primary HPV cervical screening every three years to women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 29; and every five years to those aged 30 to 65 years. The programme is up to date with invites for screening.

Two quality-assured laboratories process all CervicalCheck samples. They are Quest Diagnostics in the US, and the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital in Dublin. They perform HPV primary testing with reflex cytology. All CervicalCheck 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. Note: The Coombe has not been in a position to provide this service over the last number of months due to a combination of factors, including the significant cyberattack it suffered in December 2021 and staff absence due to illness.

At the moment all screening tests are being processed abroad. We are grateful to our laboratory provider in the US for processing samples during this post-cyber attack period, ensuring we continue to meet our key performance indicator of getting result letters to women within four weeks in over 90% of cases.

A strategic decision was made (arising from recommendations of the Dr Scally Report) in 2018 to develop a National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL) in Ireland in conjunction with the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital (CWIUH) in Dublin. 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 total number of persons screened by CervicalCheck is shown in the table above. Verified data for 2022 is not yet available.

| 2022* | Number of people screened |
|----------|---------------------------|
| January | 23,000 |
| February | 26,380 |
| March | 21,217 |
| April | 18,871 |
| May | 20,911 |
| June | 19,810 |
| July | 18,523 |
| August | 21,600 |

*Provisional data from the beginning of January to the end of August 2022, and subject to change.

BowelScreen

Bowel cancer screening is available to all people aged 60 to 69 years living in Ireland. Once a person becomes eligible for bowel screening and their details are on the BowelScreen register, we will invite them to take part in screening. If they consent to take part in screening, we will post a FIT (faecal immunochemical test) kit to their home. When they complete the test in their



home, they send their sample in a pre-paid envelope that we have provided to them, to the laboratory in Dublin where all returned FIT kits are tested. The programme was impacted significantly by the changing COVID-19 environment and the cyber-attack, which means screening invitations are currently delayed by up to a year.

The total number of persons screened by BowelScreen is shown in the table above. Verified data for 2022 is not yet available.

| 2022* | Number of people screened |
|----------|---------------------------|
| January | 4,502 |
| February | 9,383 |
| March | 9,885 |
| April | 7,817 |
| May | 11,627 |
| June | 10,517 |
| July | 10,714 |
| August | 12,279 |

*Provisional data from the beginning of January to the end of August 2022, and subject to change.

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.

