



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghástála
National Screening Service

22 September 2022

Deputy Pa Daly
pa.daly@oireachtas.ie

Our Ref: HM/GM/Communications

PQ41991/22: To ask the Minister for Health if he will approve additional mobile units for BreastCheck in County Kerry given the peripherality of the county and the difficulties for many to travel long distances for their appointment.

PQ41992/22: To ask the Minister for Health the uptake of BreastCheck appointments by county in 2019, to 2021 and to date in 2022, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

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

PQ41991/22: To ask the Minister for Health if he will approve additional mobile units for BreastCheck in County Kerry given the peripherality of the county and the difficulties for many to travel long distances for their appointment.

BreastCheck, the HSE National Breast Screening Programme, offers population-based breast screening to eligible women on an area-by-area basis every two years.

There are four regional centres delivering BreastCheck services throughout the country: Eccles Street and Merrion Road in Dublin; Newcastle Road in Galway; and Infirmary Road in Cork.

However, not all eligible women wish, or are able, to travel to one of these regional units. An important principle for the BreastCheck programme is to offer screening services locally to women in counties and locations convenient to where they live. To achieve this, each of the four screening units operates in tandem with mobile units. The majority of women participating in BreastCheck have their mammogram in one of these units.

We have recently funded three new BreastCheck mobile units, which will increase our national screening capacity. All three mobiles are now in service. However, ongoing COVID-19 challenges and radiology staff shortages continue to affect our capacity.

BreastCheck screens on an area-by-area basis every two years. We call this process a screening 'round'. Every screening round we offer screening in Co. Kerry in Tralee and then in Killarney. The BreastCheck mobile stays in one location until it has invited all eligible women in that area. It then moves to the other location and repeats this process.

Our latest round of screening in Tralee ended in December 2021. We began screening in Killarney in January 2022. We plan to return to Tralee before the end of this year. We update our breast screening locations regularly on our website [here](#).

Equitable access to screening is a priority for us. Our two screening locations in Kerry have public transport links and accessible parking facilities. This is in line with other counties with similar populations and geographical area.

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PQ41992/22: To ask the Minister for Health the uptake of BreastCheck appointments by county in 2019, to 2021 and to date in 2022, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

The table below shows the uptake rate of BreastCheck appointments by county in 2019, 2020 and to May 2022.*

% Uptake	Tobias	Co Carlow	Co Cavan	Co Clare	Co Cork	Co Donegal	Co Dublin	Co Galway	Co Kerry	Co Kildare	Co Kilkenny	Co Laois	Co Leitrim	Co Limerick	Co Longford	Co Louth	Co Mayo	Co Meath	Co Monaghan	Co Offaly	Co Roscommon	Co Sligo	Co Tipperary	Co Waterford	Co Westmeath	Co Wicklow	
Jan - Dec 2019	74%	71%	85%	90%	75%	79%	68%	74%	74%	82%	56%	57%	72%	77%	67%	69%	76%	64%	70%	77%	83%	93%	75%	81%	78%	88%	80%
Jan - Dec 2020	79%	85%	70%	93%	83%	69%	76%	86%	67%	78%	90%	85%	78%	69%	80%	71%	75%	83%	60%	89%	86%	96%	72%	77%	91%	68%	82%
Jan - Dec 2021	72%	78%	92%	57%	73%	61%	72%	57%	67%	95%	94%	71%	85%	65%	78%	79%	75%	86%	81%	66%	93%	79%	74%	68%	79%	79%	89%
Jan - May 2022	84%	81%	92%	89%	88%	78%	79%	94%	89%	78%	82%	79%	91%	92%	91%	91%	74%	91%	94%	79%	92%	92%	85%	86%	53%	92%	87%

* Please note that 2022 data is provisional and not yet complete.

The uptake rate is the percentage of women invited in a time-period who take up their screening invitation. Uptake rates in 2020 and 2021 were impacted by the effect of COVID-19 on screening. This included a pause in breast screening while we supported symptomatic services; participant and staff appointment cancellations; and a reduction in capacity due to heightened infection control measures. Screening involves inviting well women into a healthcare environment where they may be at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. Understandably, some women made the choice not to take up their breast screening appointment during the pandemic. Despite these challenges, BreastCheck maintained the national uptake target of over 70% of invited women.

Being breast aware

BreastCheck is a screening service for well women within the population age range (50-69 years) and is not for women with symptoms. If a woman has any concerns about their breasts, they should not attend screening and should instead contact their GP for appropriate advice. It is important that every woman is breast aware. This means knowing what is normal for them so that if any unusual change occurs, they will recognise it. More information on how to be breast aware is available on www.breastcheck.ie

Women in the Kerry area who have additional questions regarding breast screening can contact the BreastCheck Southern unit on 021 464 9700 Monday to Friday between 8am–5pm; Freephone 1800 45 45 55 from 9am-6pm, Monday to Friday; or email info@breastcheck.ie

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

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy, Chief Executive.

