



13 February 2023

Deputy Johnny Mythen
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Our Ref: HM/Communications

PQ6020/23: To ask the Minister for Health if there is still a delay in individuals being called for BreastCheck screening in County Wexford, since the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic; the length of this delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

About BreastCheck

There are four regional centres responsible for the delivery of BreastCheck 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. A new mobile unit was added to the national BreastCheck fleet in 2021 and a further two mobile units have been commissioned to facilitate screening appointments around the country. We update our breast screening locations regularly on our website, [here](#).

BreastCheck and the impact of COVID-19

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.

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.

Despite the ongoing challenges in recruitment and retention of staff and COVID-19 related absences, BreastCheck is back to nearly normal numbers attending for screening daily. We aim to be back to two-yearly screens by autumn 2023. This is dependent on meeting the challenge of staff recruitment and retention.

Screening in Wexford

In each screening round we carry out screening from two sites in Wexford: Wexford (the Grounds of Ely hospital, Ferrybank), and Gorey (Gorey Health Centre).

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





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National Screening Service

The Wexford mobile screening unit completed its last screening round between 23 November 2018 and 14 January 2020. The Wexford mobile unit began the current round of screening in February 2022.

The Gorey mobile screening unit completed its last screening round between 27 May 2019 and 27 November 2020. The Gorey mobile unit commenced the current round of screening in November 2022.

Both mobiles will remain onsite until all eligible women within the current round have been invited for screening.

Being breast aware

We continue to emphasise to our participants that 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 person has any concerns or symptoms concerning their breasts, they should not attend screening and should instead contact their GP who will give them the appropriate advice.

It is important that every woman is breast aware. This means knowing what is normal for her so that if any unusual change occurs, she will recognise it. If cancer is found early, treatment is more likely to be successful. It is therefore important for women to get into the habit of looking at and checking their breasts at least on a monthly basis. More information on techniques for checking your breasts is available on www.breastcheck.ie

Women who have additional questions regarding breast screening can contact 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, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy,
Chief Executive.

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