



1 March 2023

Deputy Niamh Smyth TD
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ7599.23: To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on the waiting lists for the BreastCheck national breast cancer screening programme; the steps his Department is taking to deal with this backlog; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ7605.23: To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on the number of mammograms carried out by BreastCheck in 2022; how this number compares to numbers of mammograms carried out over the previous three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ7606.23: To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on the number of BreastCheck screening locations; if there are plans afoot to increase this number; if there are plans to have a screening unit in every county in Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ7613.23: To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on the BreastCheck annual screening report; the reason a report has not been published since 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above four Parliamentary Questions, which I will answer together. I trust you're in agreement with this approach.

BreastCheck screening locations

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'.

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.

We have 24 mobile units, three of which are new in the last 2 years, and we have increased our capacity to screen around the country. The units move around over the course of each screening 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. We update our breast screening locations regularly on our website, [here](#).

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BreastCheck: numbers screened

Please find here the number of total number of women screened by BreastCheck in each of the past four years:

BreastCheck	Number of women screened
2019	170,957
2020*	56,270
2021*	127,288
2022	156,786

* BreastCheck paused for several months due to COVID-19 during this period

Along with many public services, BreastCheck was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 this year. This is dependent on meeting the continued challenge of staff recruitment and retention.

Programme report

BreastCheck produces programme reports from data received from our screening units. The data is collated and verified over many months. Our most recent report is the *BreastCheck Statistical Report 2020*, which was published on 1 February 2023. We are now collating and verifying data for our next programme report. You can read our programme reports in the Publications section of screeningservice.ie, or by clicking [here](#).

We provide updates on breast screening on www.breastcheck.ie. Women can also contact us on info@breastcheck.ie or Freephone 1800 45 45 55. 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