



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

National Screening Service

Public Health Team Activity Report 2022



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Public Health Team Activity Report 2022

The National Screening Service (NSS) delivers four national population-based screening programmes. We screen for bowel, breast and cervical cancer, and for retinopathy in people who have diabetes.

The Public Health team works with the four programmes through priority actions related to addressing equity in screening, improving the quality of the programmes, and improving population health. Public Health facilitates the delivery of projects to assist the NSS and its programmes to achieve these goals.

The Public Health department welcomes the NSS 2023–2027 strategy and will work towards achieving the goals set out therein. The goals, listed here, and the associated objectives are important to us and will guide our efforts, work, and development over the coming years:

- Engagement and partnership

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- Operational excellence

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- Service development

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- People and culture

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- Governance and quality assurance

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- Data and information

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Public Health Goals and Objectives

Throughout 2022, the NSS Public Health team continued to work in collaboration with NSS Programmes and Functions, and external partners to help achieve their goals of 1) addressing equity in screening 2) improving the quality of the four screening programmes and 3) improving population health. These goals guided the team's work and priority projects throughout the year. This report demonstrates the work that has been carried out during 2022.

Figure 1: Public Health team goals and priority projects

GOAL 1 Address equity in screening	GOAL 2 Improve the quality of the programmes	GOAL 3 Improve population health
1.1 Equity – Strategic framework development	2.1 Strengthen quality assurance	3.1 Elimination of cervical cancer
1.2 LGBT+ implementation	2.2 Patient and Public Partnership, & 221+ engagement	3.2 Information Hub
1.3 Traveller Health/Pavee Point Project	2.3 Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMS) – BowelScreen	3.3 Health Promotion (incl. education & training and Partnerships)
1.4 Disability Needs Assessment	2.4 Exploring the role that self-sampling might play in cervical screening	
1.5 Geocoding	2.5 Assisted Decision Making	

Goal 1

Address equity in screening

1.1 Equity – Strategic framework development

Health equity is when everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Health inequities are differences in health status or in the distribution of health resources, between population groups, which are avoidable and unfair.

We are developing a framework so that we can better understand and improve equity in our services. We want everyone to understand what screening is and to participate in screening if they want to.

The Public Health team is collaborating with internal NSS stakeholders and external partners to co-produce a strategic framework to improve equity in screening. Building both on the evidence and experience of addressing inequities in screening services, the framework will set the strategic direction for our work over the coming five years. It will be published in mid-2023.

By the end of 2022, an Equity Project Advisory Group had identified several important themes that need to be addressed to reduce inequities in screening. Priorities such as data, research, access supports, partnership and education and training have emerged through an initial consultation process (graphic below relates). These priorities and related commitments will be further developed through a consultative process with a wider group of external and internal NSS stakeholders in early 2023.

Please refer to our report, [Working to reduce inequality in screening](#), and [blog](#) for further details on some of our equity projects.

Image 1: Graphic drawing of discussions at an equity advisory co-production workshop



1.2 Traveller Health/Pavee Point project

The aim of the Traveller Health Project that commenced in 2022 was to address cancer prevention, and early detection and provide information on the four screening programmes with the Traveller population in Finglas and Blanchardstown (Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) Area 9).

This collaboration between BowelScreen, Pavee Point and the HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) will optimise the Traveller community gaining wider access to information and support in relation to cancer risk reduction and will maximise synergies between organisations. The first phase of the project was a BowelScreen project which included an educational session, fieldwork, and a focus group work with Traveller Primary Health Care Workers (PHCWs). This was completed in 2022. Subsequent phases will include projects with BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and Diabetic RetinaScreen. Progress on these will commence in 2023.

Quotes from Pavee Point primary healthcare workers.

"I think any information that you get about different cancers is good, no matter what you think you know, it is always better to get more information"

"A lot of people might not be registered with the database, so we need to make sure we inform people to register once they turn 60"

Image 2: Graphic drawing of the BowelScreen project process developed with PHCW's



1.3 LGBT+ implementation

We commenced implementation of recommendations from a 2021 report on [LGBT+ Cervical Screening Study](#). Several initiatives have been implemented in 2022 including:

- LGBT+ awareness training for our CervicalCheck staff.
- A quick reference guide for sample takers working with the LGBT+ community has been published and is [available here](#). The one-page document provides a quick reference on LGBT+ language, cervical screening needs, and links to LGBT+ organisations for sample takers.
- [Webinars](#) for sample takers on LGBT+ inclusion in cervical screening and good practice in supporting the trans community were delivered.
- A dedicated point of contact for the LGBT+ community in CervicalCheck.
- Wide dissemination of the findings of the research through various [publications](#).
- The Health Promotion team presented at an all-Ireland LGBT+ health symposium in UCD.

We continue to implement report recommendations and work in collaboration with our colleagues from the LGBT+ community.

"I now know how to use the correct pronouns and am more comfortable in knowing to ask "what pronoun do you like to use?". I now have a clear understanding of difference between sexual orientation and gender identity" Quote from a staff member who attended LGBT+ training

1.4 Disability Needs Assessment

It is important to understand the delivery of our services and the effectiveness of that model of delivery for service users. The NSS wanted to explore the needs of people with disabilities in accessing national screening services. The purpose of the disability needs assessment was to examine the perspectives and experiences of people with disabilities in accessing screening services and to assess factors that influence their uptake of screening services. We wanted to understand unmet needs and the current lived experience of those using our services.

The aim of our Disability Needs Assessment was to:

- Collect and analyse information and data on the experience and participation of people with disabilities in screening
- Assess the gaps between screening service delivery and the potential participation of people with disabilities.

In 2022 we worked with Dublin City University (DCU) to:

- Complete a literature review
- Develop a patient and public partnership
- Carry out a consultation
- Develop a report

The final report and recommendations will be delivered in 2023. On publication, we will work with our stakeholders to help meet the needs of people with disabilities.

1.5 Geocoding – a pilot

In 2022, a team from NSS including Public Health, Programme Evaluation Unit (PEU) and CervicalCheck worked with the Health Intelligence Unit on a geocoding pilot project.

Geocoding refers to adding location data to screening records. Having data at a lower geographic level allows for better planning and outcome analysis as regional variations can be assessed to identify reasons for the differences. This means strategies can be put in place to address these differences and improve access and equitable uptake.

Through geocoding we will have lower-level address data and be able to pinpoint differences at a smaller geographic area e.g., as low as areas covering 100 to 300 letterboxes. This will allow for more sophisticated understanding of the equity of our screening programme and facilitate targeted work with localities to improve access and coverage.

In 2022, we did some work on adding address data to screening records. The next phase of the project will consider what intelligence we can draw from the data. This will help the NSS improve service delivery and planning by understanding any geographical differences in screening. This can also be compared with other information e.g., on deprivation to improve equity of services.

Goal 2

Improve the Quality of Programmes

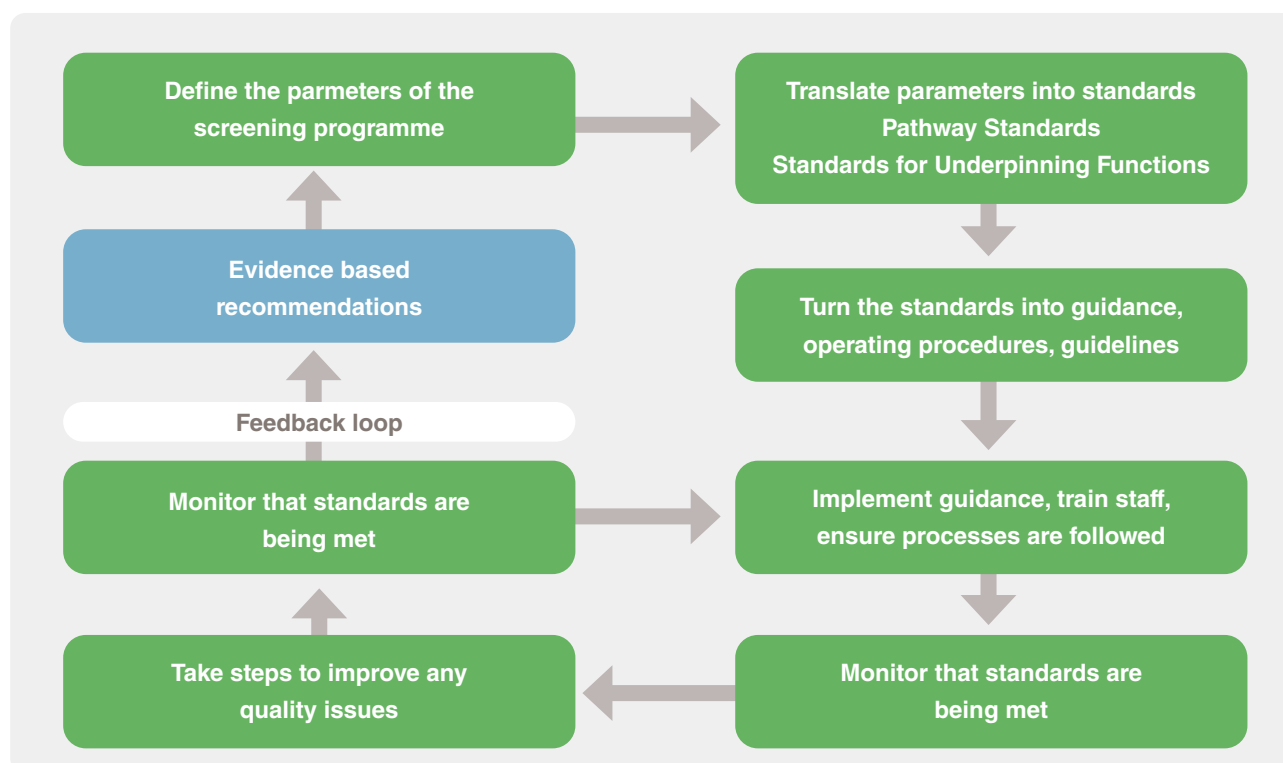
2.1 Strengthen quality assurance

The Quality Assurance (QA) Policy Framework was approved and became an active document in the NSS in April 2022. The Public Health and the Quality Safety and Risk Management departments led the development of the policy, and worked in conjunction with the NSS screening programmes. The aim of the policy was to strengthen and standardise existing quality assurance processes across the programmes. The purpose of the policy is to provide a framework for a standardised cross-programme approach to quality assurance for the national screening programmes. This will lead to a more objective, consistent and effective approach to QA and ultimately improve outcomes for the participants of our screening programmes.

QA is the process of checking that standards are met and encouraging continuous improvement. Assuring and improving the quality of population screening services is essential, so that intended benefits are maximised, and unintended harms are minimised for those taking part. This benefit to harm ratio is especially important given that screening programmes are designed for populations or individuals who do not have any symptoms of the disease in question.

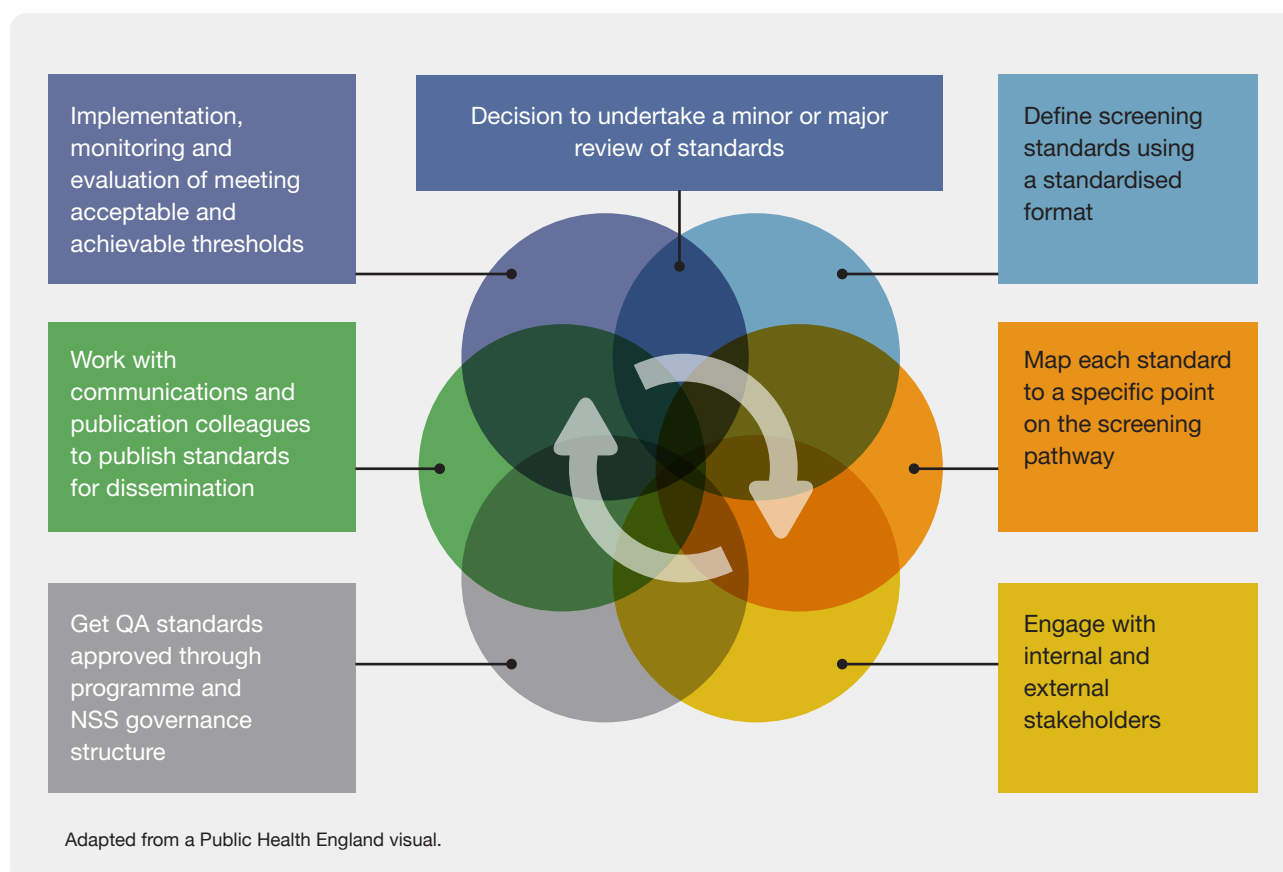
Figure 2: Running a high-quality screening programme.

(Adapted from *Screening Programmes, a short guide*, World Health Organisation, 2020)



Since the publication of the QA Policy Framework, several supporting documents have been developed, including a Standard Setting and Review Policy for population-based screening programmes. This document sets out how a standard should be set, how to initiate a review and conduct an evidence review. The document will be signed off in 2023 and will guide the process of all subsequent reviews of QA standards.

Image 3: Standard setting and revision procedure



The NSS Public Health and the Quality, Safety and Risk departments are developing a quality manual, with the programmes' quality teams, as part of the suite of documents underpinning the QA Policy Framework. QA coordinators, PEU, Communications and Client Services teams are also collaborating on the development of documents. When complete, they will set out the quality requirements that must be adhered to across all programmes and bring standardisation where possible.

2.2 Patient and Public Partnership

Throughout 2022, we continued the implementation of the Patient and Public Partnership (PPP) Strategy and worked towards fully embedding the PPP function within NSS operations and business. The PPP Implementation Group were part of the process to develop the NSS strategy. We also developed a plan for the group to set PPP annual priorities.

Throughout 2022, the PPP Network has worked on a variety of NSS projects including: NSS Strategy development, the Information Hub, the development of a strategic framework for improving equity, the Cervical Cancer Elimination Project, the Expert Reference Group (ERG) and Interval Cancer (IC) Groups. We also launched a PPP recruitment campaign to ensure we have an inclusive and diverse PPP Network that represent the people using our services. We developed a series of PPP video testimonials (see [here](#) and [here](#)), to support our recruitment campaign.

As we move into the final year of the strategy, a permanent PPP Committee is being established to ensure that PPP is a routine part of NSS business. This will include being embedded as part of operational processes including to provide oversight and governance for PPP projects/ activities, and to ensure a person-centred culture within the NSS. PPP will also remain an important objective in the new NSS corporate strategy, and we will continue to monitor and evaluate our work to help strengthen how we work with our partners.

Image 4: PPP video recording in NSS Central Office with PPP Reps Grace, Nicky, Will and Keith



"When I agreed to be a Patient Representative, I was very concerned that I was simply there to tick a box. It has been a pleasure to discover that this hasn't been the case, and in fact patient involvement is now being viewed by many in the service as vital."

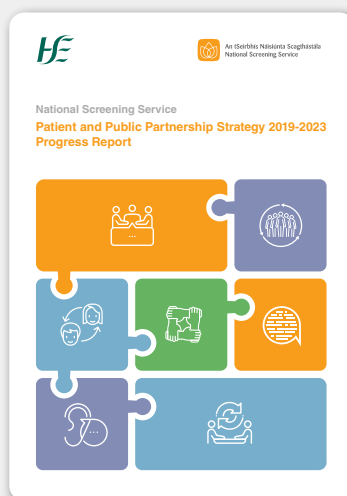
Grace, PPP Representative

"PPP on these important projects is more than a tokenistic gesture; it provides a real and substantial benefit to all stakeholders. I have experienced the trust between the NSS staff, medical professionals, and the PPP Rep involvement."

Moir, PPP Representative

More information is available in our [PPP progress report](#), [PPP blog](#) and *PPP Working in partnership* videos [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#).

Image 5: Patient & Public Partnership Progress Report 2022

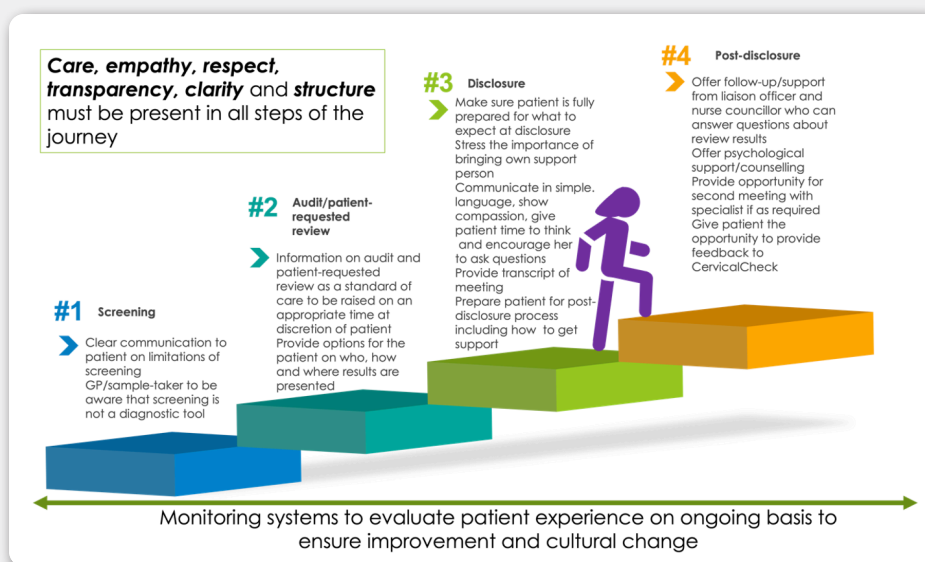


Consultation with members of 221+

Public Health co-designed and conducted a consultation with members of the 221+ support group. The aim of the consultation was to understand their experiences of the interval cancer audit disclosure process in 2018. The report called for improved information and support across the whole screening pathway, from the information provided prior to the first screening appointment, to recommendations for support for women who have disclosure of the results of their Personal Cervical Screening Review. The recommendations are outlined in Figure 3 below.

The recommendations from the report have informed the development of ethical principles to guide the development of the new audit and disclosure process known as Personal Cervical Screening Reviews. They have also been used to develop training being rolled out by the national Open Disclosure team. 221+ members have since been engaged in reviewing new communications materials for interval cervical cancer audit and disclosure.

Figure 3: Recommendations from the 221+ consultation



2.3 Patient Related Experience Measures survey (PREMs) – BowelScreen

A key part of our PPP strategy is trying to understand what it feels like to use our services and what gets in the way. A specific action for the PPP strategy is “to incorporate routine patient feedback and patient experience surveys into annual business and quality improvement”.

BowelScreen stepped-up to be the pilot programme for the Patient Reported Experience Measure (PREMs) survey. It was launched in April 2022. The survey gathers real time feedback from screening participants and explores their experience at each stage of the BowelScreen journey. The purpose of the survey is to capture what our patients think of our services quickly, easily, and to learn from their feedback. Their responses provide us with information on how well we communicate, the standard of our service and helps us identify where improvements can be made across the programme including our colonoscopy units.

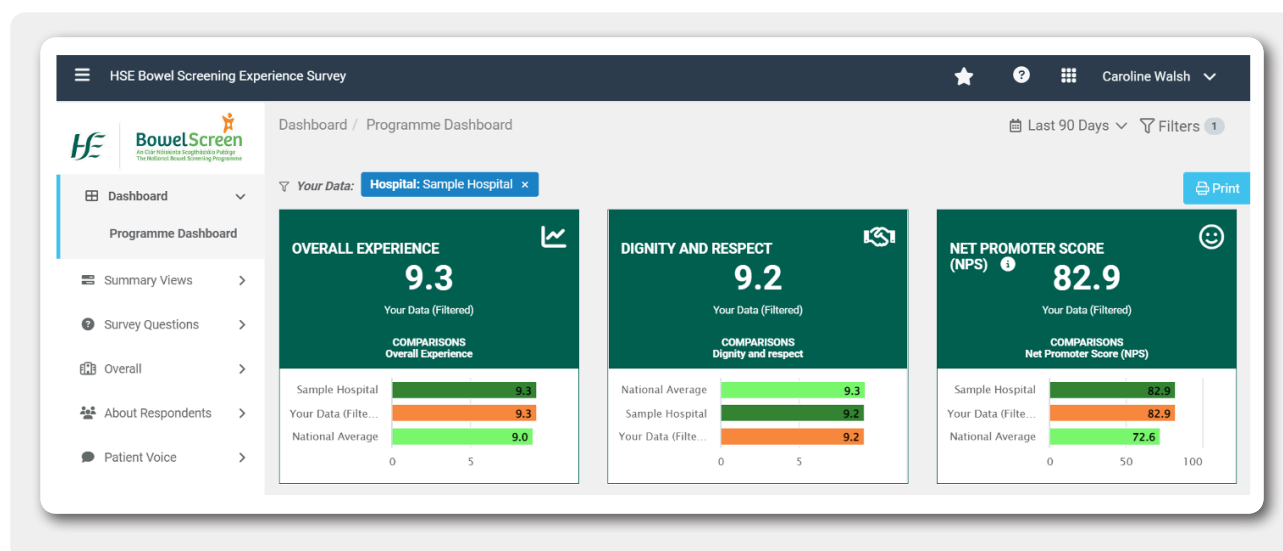
“The project benefitted from the learnings from two prior BowelScreen patient experience studies. This afforded the programme the opportunity to implement the learnings from the paper-based approach to an on-line approach. When the survey went live it was evident that early stakeholder engagement, a knowledgeable project team, and the expertise of Cemplicity, made the project seamless”

Hilary Coffey, BowelScreen Programme Manager

As a result of the success of this pilot the PREMs programme is scheduled to be implemented across BreastCheck in 2023.

To read our PREMs blog, click [here](#).

Image 6: Screenshots from BowelScreen PREMs dashboard



2.4 Exploring the role that self-sampling might play in cervical screening

The Public Health team and CervicalCheck prepared a research proposal, outlining several potential projects that would help us to understand the role that self-sampling might play in cervical screening in Ireland. There is evidence that self-sampling can improve the uptake of cervical screening but there are still many unknowns, including the ideal method of implementation.

We received funding from the Women's Health Taskforce in 2022 to support this research. Using that funding, we developed a population survey which will assess the attitudes and preferences for self-sampling of women eligible for cervical screening in Ireland. The results of this survey will be available in 2023.

The National Screening Advisory Committee has also considered if self-sampling should be added as a method of cervical screening in Ireland. Please see [here](#) for proposed modifications to existing screening programmes.

For more information, please read our [blog](#)

2.5 Assisted Decision Making

The Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act was signed into law on 30 December 2015. The Act is about supporting decision-making and maximising a person's capacity to make decisions. The Act will have significant implications for health and social care providers in the provision of safe person-centred care, based on respecting the individual rights of each person. The Act moves away from a 'best interests' approach for people who need support with decision making to a 'rights-based' approach to decision making taking account of the will and preference of the individual.

From an NSS perspective, ideally the will and preference (of the individual) should be resolved and documented in a person's healthcare record/care plan, before responding to an invitation for screening with any of the individual programmes. A Public Health project team has started drafting programme-specific booklets that will be made available to staff and carers to support our ADM populations; i.e., those individuals or locations that are likely to support ADM population.

Goal 3

Improve Population Health

3.1 Elimination of Cervical Cancer

Ireland has started work towards eliminating cervical cancer as set out by the WHO in the Global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem, published in 2020.

A Cervical Cancer Elimination (CCE) Strategic Group was established, chaired by Public Health, to set the direction of travel for elimination of cervical cancer in Ireland. This brings together HSE partners responsible for vaccination, screening, and treatment, along with external partners with roles in registration of cancer data, policy leads in the Department of Health, advocacy organisations, and public representatives.

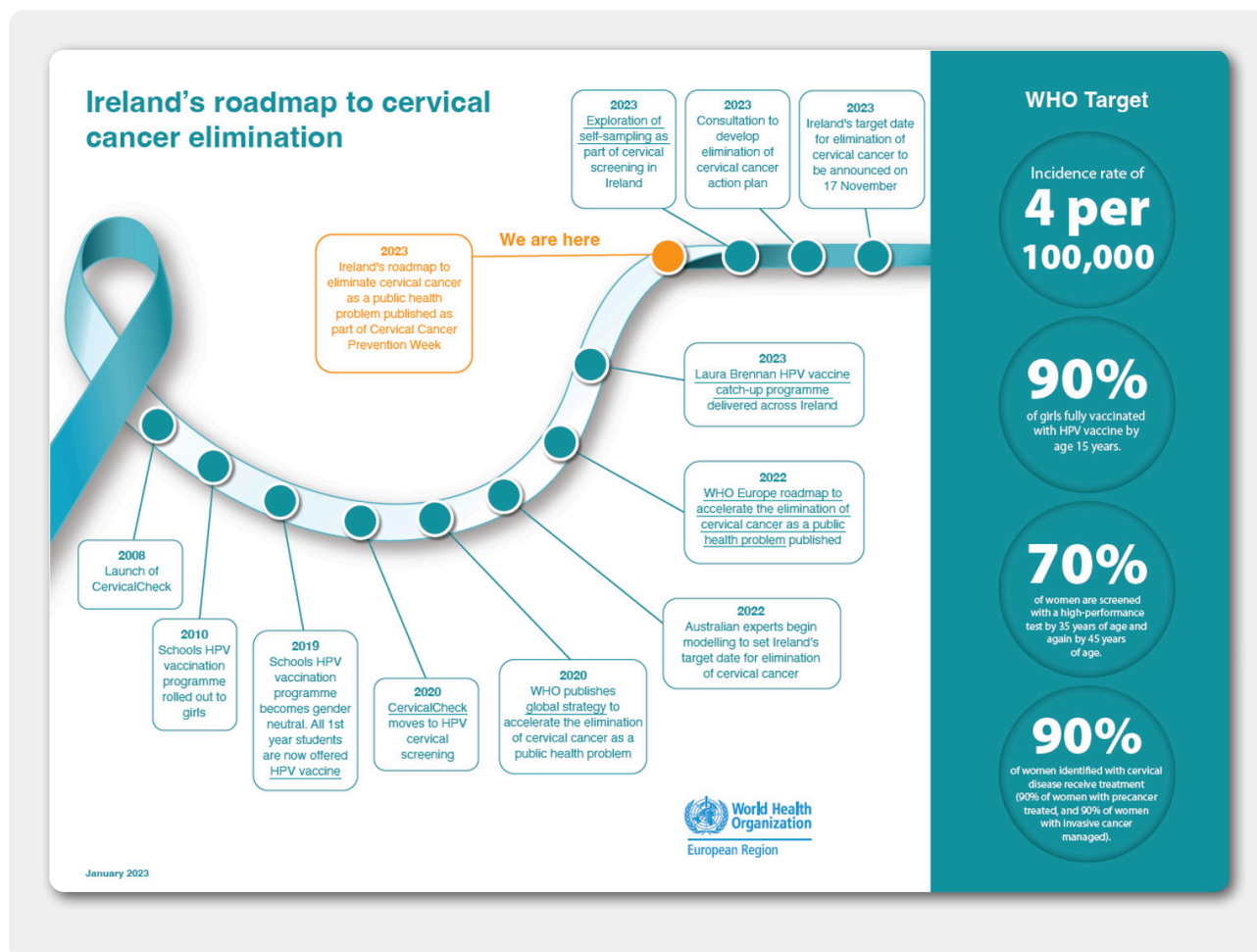
We have continued working with experts to model a date by when we aim to realise the aim of eliminating cervical cancer in Ireland. The modelling will be completed in 2023 and will result in a target date being set for elimination of cervical cancer which we will collectively work towards.

This work will continue in 2023 with the launch of a roadmap to achieve CCE in January. The work will also include expanded consultation and partnership working, research into self-sampling, the launch of the HPV vaccine catch-up campaign (including a change to a single dose vaccine), and the commencement on the development an action plan. This work will culminate in a launch event on 17 November 2023.

Image 7: WHO Eliminate Cervical Cancer



Image 8: Ireland's roadmap to cervical cancer elimination



Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe said:

"I welcome the launch of Ireland's roadmap to eliminate cervical cancer, based on the principles of the new WHO roadmap for the European region. A cervical cancer-free future is within our grasp. Politicians and policymakers have the opportunity to realise this vision by providing equitable access to the HPV vaccine, organising national screening programmes, and offering quality and affordable diagnosis and treatment."

"We look to Ireland as a trailblazer in achieving this ambitious goal and wish you every success in implementing your roadmap. Thank you for your crucial contribution to eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem in the European Region."

3.2 Information Hub

During 2022, Public Health and Communications trialed a new function within the Screening Service called the Information Hub. We worked with the programmes during the pilot. The purpose of the Hub was to enhance processes for developing and disseminating communications content. Hub processes were piloted over a six-month period by a team made up of members of the Public Health and Communications teams.

The Hub team applied new processes to a programme of work. These processes involved putting the patient at the centre, standardising practice and thereby improving the quality of outputs.

The Hub also provided training for staff on writing in plain English and blog writing. Blogs are now a regular feature of NSS communications and can be read [here](#). An external evaluation of the Hub reviewed the effectiveness of Hub processes and found that stakeholders:

“felt assured that by following the process, all communications produced were evidence-based and person-centered. The robustness of the process instilled a sense of confidence that the resources produced, observed best practice, and through documentation there was transparency around decisions”

Recommendations made by the Hub team and in the evaluation report have been taken on board, and refined ways of working are now being implemented by the Hub team.

Image 9: Information Hub Evaluation Report – snapshot of findings.



Another achievement for the Hub is its identification for a new skillset within the NSS; i.e., behavioural insights.

A new Behavioural Insights and Change manager will join the team in 2023 and that is seen as an exciting addition, not only to the Hub team, but to the wider NSS.

As more Hub recruits come on board, the Hub will transition to become more embedded in the Communications team. Public Health will continue to work in an advisory capacity to the Hub.

3.3 Health Promotion

Education & Training

The Public Health team in NSS plays a role in training and education, providing content in varying formats to multiple audiences. We support people to understand how the four screening programmes work, the principles of screening and the benefits and limitations of screening.

We play a role in developing content and contributing to existing content/ training courses. Standardising messaging and ensuring that the public and healthcare professionals understand screening is the aim of our training and education function.

Throughout 2022, the Public Health team was involved in the delivery of numerous educational webinars for NSS staff, HSE staff, members of the public and academic institutions. For example, over 300 participants attended our *What is Screening – What the public needs to know, and Increasing participation in cervical screening* webinars.

To find out more about some of our webinars and updates, click [here](#). The schedule for 2023 CervicalCheck webinars can be found [here](#).

Image 10: 'Increasing participation in cervical screening' webinar

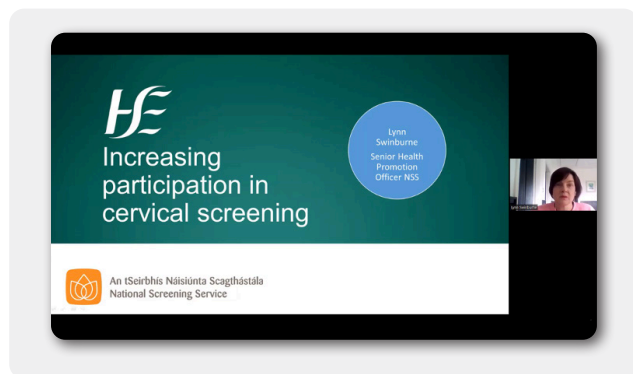
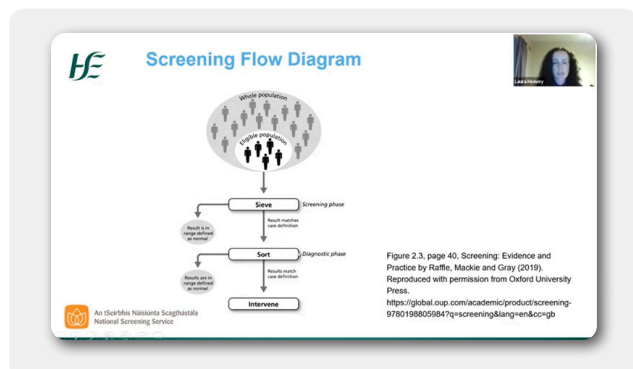


Image 12, NSS Health Promotion at the Diabetes Primary Care Conference 2022



Image 11: 'What is population-based screening' webinar



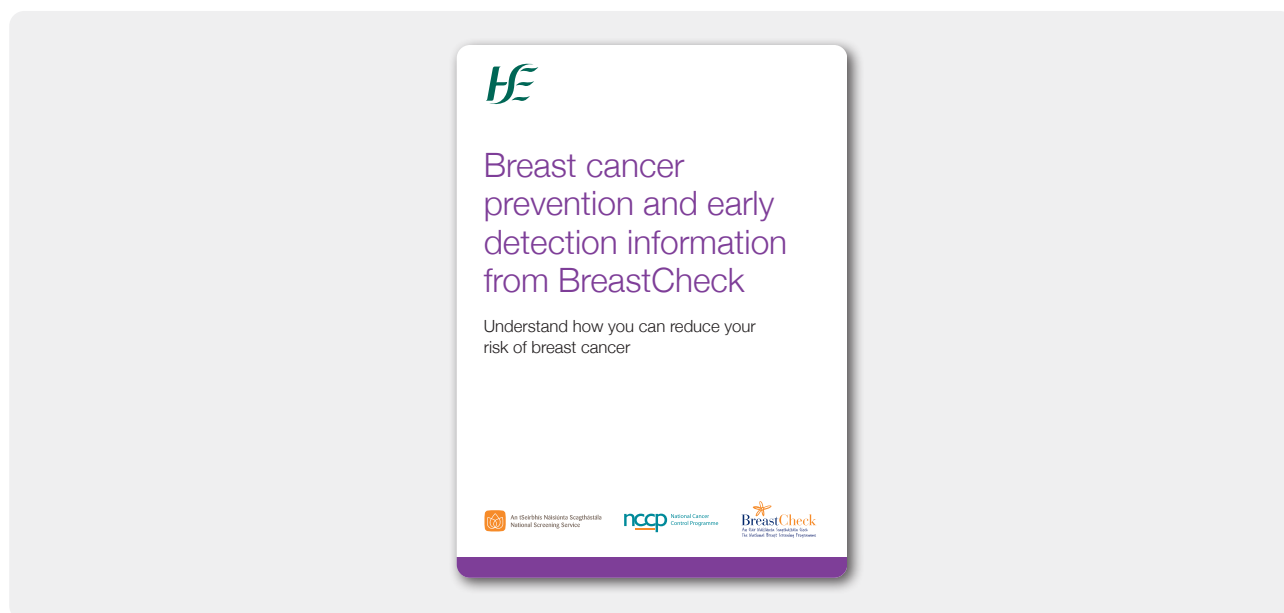
Development of information resources

To roll out evidence-based information, in different formats, on what increases and reduces risk of breast cancer and will include information on breast density:

HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP), NSS Public Health, BreastCheck and the Communications team produced a leaflet titled [*Breast Cancer Prevention and early detection information from BreastCheck: Understand how you can reduce your risk of breast cancer*](#), in May. The leaflet publication coincided with the launch of a RCSI breast density and breast cancer research project, further details are available in this [blog](#).

Public Health and BreastCheck will deliver a webinar on the content of the leaflet in 2023.

Image 13: Breast cancer prevention and early detection information from BreastCheck



Partnership working

Our Health Promotion team continued to build and sustain partnerships with groups and organisations across the country. Two examples are provided below.

Health & Well Being, HSE, Dublin North City and County (DNCC) partnership work

Public Health in the NSS and Health & Well Being, HSE, Dublin North City and County (DNCC) are working collaboratively to develop initiatives to support people in DNCC to avail of screening. In 2022, the NSS delivered two screening webinars for staff in DNCC to provide them with information on screening and how to support people they meet to avail of screening.

In addition, the NSS also provided a webinar for staff on the screening service and how they themselves can avail of screening. All webinars were evaluated and the feedback from the webinars has supported the development of the equity toolkit and screening e-learning module.

Kerry Travellers partnership work

Image 14: A cake to celebrate International Women's Day, courtesy of the Kerry Travellers Health & Community Development Project

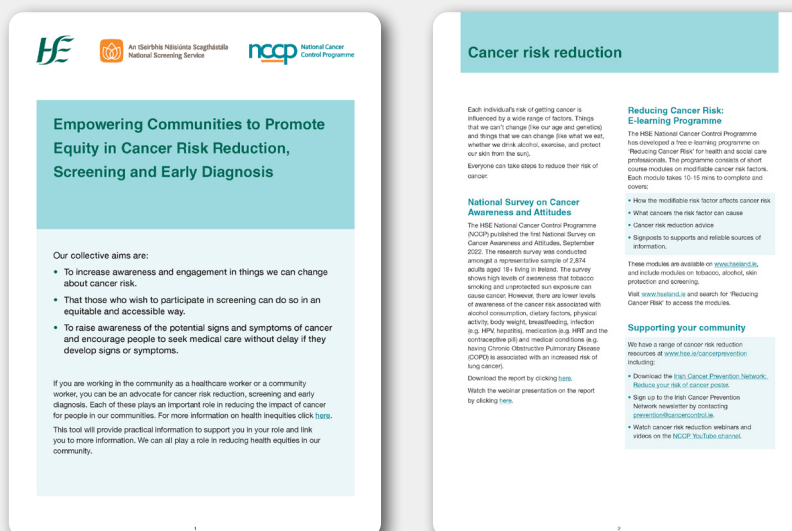


Our Health Promotion team met with women from the Kerry Travellers Project in Tralee on 8 March 2022. The group, which included community health workers, support workers, and women from the community, heard from two speakers at the event. The meeting was in line with the outreach work of the Health Promotion team, which involves gathering feedback on participation in screening for groups that may find it difficult to come to screening. Our team spoke about women's health including breast cancer, cervical cancer, early symptoms, supports, and looking out for one another.

Equity toolkit

In 2022, the Public Health department in the National Screening Service, in partnership with the National Cancer Control Programme, published an [Equity toolkit](#) online for community health workers to aid in their role in promoting equity in the community. This toolkit gathers information about risk reduction, screening and early diagnosis into one interactive document. It's easy to use and gives practical guidance on supporting communities to reduce inequities in cancer risk.

Image 15: Equity toolkit



New e-learning modules

The National Screening Service has developed a screening e-learning module for community workers. This is part of a suite of e-learning modules being developed by the National Cancer Control Programme on reducing cancer risk for health and social care professionals.

The aim of the *Population-based cancer screening programmes* module is to have a simple and user-friendly e-learning module describing screening and the three cancer-related screening programmes (BreastCheck, BowelScreen and CervicalCheck) in Ireland; and to assist health and social care professionals as they support people to make informed decisions about taking part in these programmes. The Public Health team will develop a Diabetic RetinaScreen e-learning module in 2023.

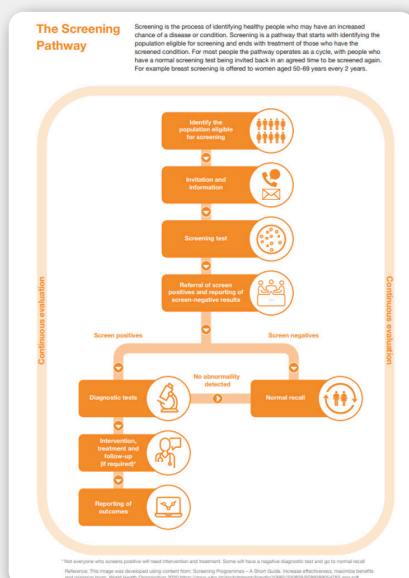
Image 16: Screenshot from the new e-learning module



New screening pathway visual

The Public Health team worked with designers to develop a selection of useful visual that can be used to raise awareness and understanding of the screening pathways.

Figure 4: Newly developed screening pathway visual



The Year Ahead

The Public Health team welcomes the development of the NSS corporate strategy. The strategy provides direction and reinforces the importance of the Public Health team's work as we strive towards delivering an accessible compassionate and participant-centred service that delivers positive experiences, as well as equitable and high-quality care. Our projects and work in 2023 will align to the NSS priorities areas and we will continue to focus on working in line with the NSS values of care, compassion, trust and learning.

For further information please contact publichealth.support@screeningservice.ie

The achievements set out in this document would not have been possible without the involvement and collaboration with BowelScreen, BreastCheck, CervicalCheck and Diabetic RetinaScreen. We wish to acknowledge the work of the clinical, management and support teams across the four screening programmes and all the NSS functions.

We would like to thank our Patient and Public Partnership Representatives. Their expertise and insights have been invaluable to us, and we are very grateful to all who have given their time and voice to support our work. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our external stakeholders and partners for collaborating on numerous projects throughout 2022.

We look forward to continuing our work with you all in the future.



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

National Screening Service
King's Inns House,
200 Parnell Street, Dublin 1, D01 A3Y8.

Tel: 01 865 9300

Email: info@screeningservice.ie

Website: www.screeningservice.ie

NSS/PUB/PH-8 Rev 1