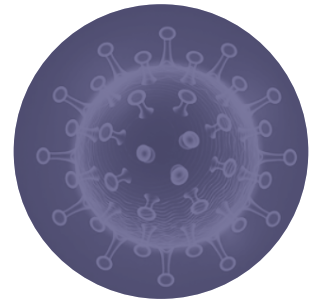




An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghástála
National Screening Service

National Screening Service

Public Health Team Activity Report 2021



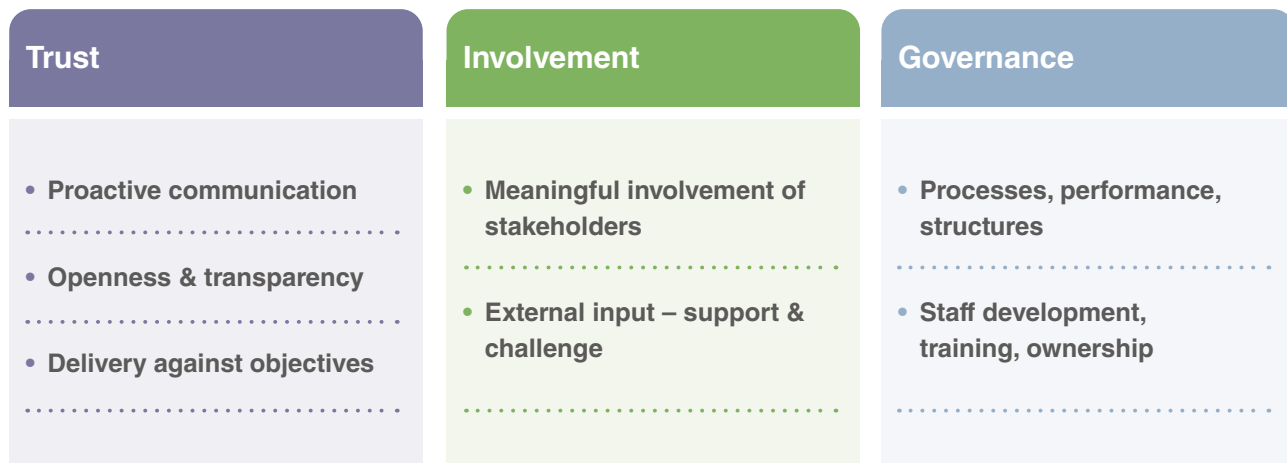
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Public Health Team Activity Report, 2021

Trust, involvement and governance are the three overarching goals that set the direction for the National Screening Service. Underneath these goals are a number of priority actions. Each Department across the Service has been working towards achieving these goals and actions. The Public Health Team has contributed in a variety of ways including proactively engaging and communicating with the public and key stakeholders and implementing best practice processes and structures to build openness and transparency.

Figure 1: NSS goals



Public Health Goals and Objectives

Within the context of the overarching NSS goals, the Public Health Team identified their own goals including addressing equity in screening, improving the quality of the programmes and improving population health.

Figure 2: Public Health Team goals



Under each goal there were a number of priority projects that the Team progressed. These are set out below.

Table 1: Public Health Department goals and projects

GOAL 1 Address equity in screening	GOAL 2 Improve the quality of the programmes	GOAL 3 Improve population health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Strategy • LGBTQ+ Research with CervicalCheck • Easy-read – BreastCheck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Quality Assurance (QA) • Information Governance • Patient and Public Partnership (PPP) • Text Message Feasibility Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elimination of Cervical Cancer • Information Resources • Health Promotion • Screening Masterclasses • Access supports • Public Health Team resourcing

Further detail on these projects is set out below.

Goal 1

Addressing equity in screening

Equity Strategy

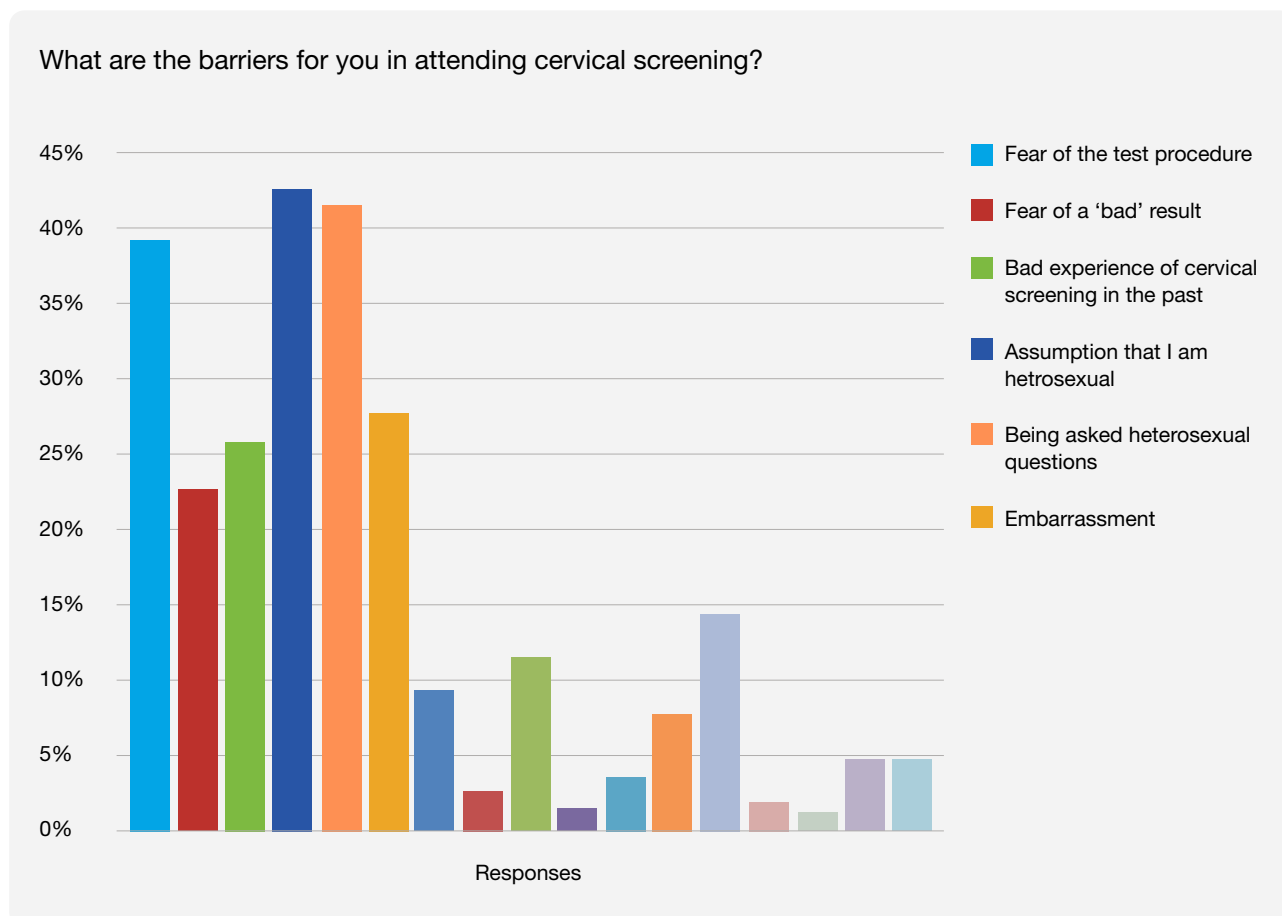
Screening services need to be equitable to make sure all those who are eligible can take up the offer to take part if they want to. Services have to be accessible to all eligible people no matter where they live, who they are, or their social circumstances. The Public Health Team has been identifying and addressing health inequalities in their work for some time. Some of the key achievements from 2021 are:

- Publication of a [LGBT+ and cervical screening](#) research and a [blog](#) highlighting key findings and recommendations (further detail below)
- Publication of an [Equity Report](#) and a [blog](#) relating to the Report
- Engagement with key stakeholders including HSE Social Inclusion, migrant community groups and Community Health Organisations (CHOs) to build capacity and scope further partnership potential
- The award of a research tender which will focus on the screening needs of people with disabilities
- Engagement in a series of workshops relating to the Public Sector Human Rights Duty.

LGBT+ Research with CervicalCheck

A research project on LGBT+ participation, experience and knowledge on cervical screening was completed in March 2021. The research found that 66.5% of respondents attended screening, compared to 80% among the general population. The main barriers to screening are shown in the graph below.

Figure 3: LGBT+ research; barriers to attending for cervical screening



The research found that screening uptake could be improved with more targeted messaging and campaigning aimed at the LGBT+ community. Working in partnership with the community, using multi-media tools and creating more LGBT+ friendly clinical environments and practitioners could also improve attendance.

The report highlighted a number of recommendations relating to:

1. Training and supports for sample takers
2. Inclusion of LGBT+ community in cervical screening
3. Communication with LGBT+ community
4. Partnership work
5. Further research

Work will continue in 2022 to progress the implementation of the recommendations in collaboration with CervicalCheck.

Easy-Read Resources

A project to co-design a suite of easy-read materials for [BreastCheck](#) and [BowelScreen](#) was undertaken in 2021. Resources were created in collaboration with project partners including ACE communications, and Kerry Parents and Friends. The purpose of the project was to provide information in an easy-to-read format for patients whilst not overloading the person with information. Photo stories were used to give people a clear sense of an exact experience that they can expect in a service.

Print materials and videos with and without subtitles were developed. The team also created a resource for carers which gives an overview of the new material, and their uses in the community. Resources can be used differently, depending on the persons communication style.

Figure 4: BreastCheck easy-read leaflet

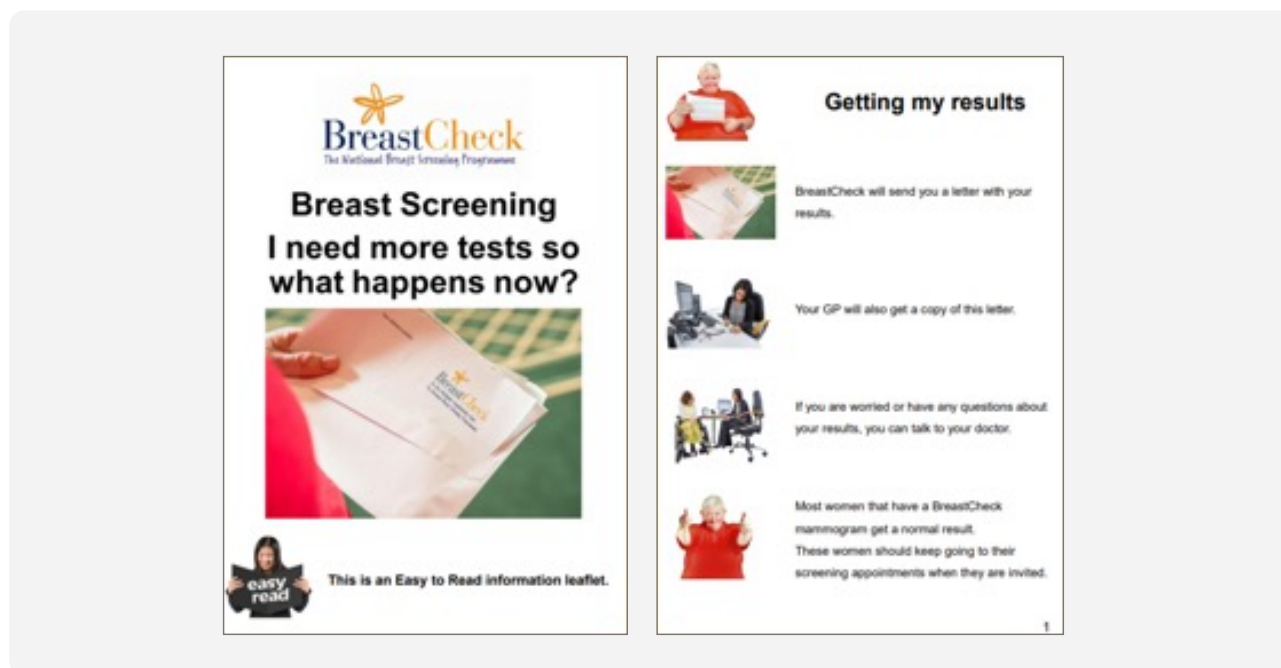
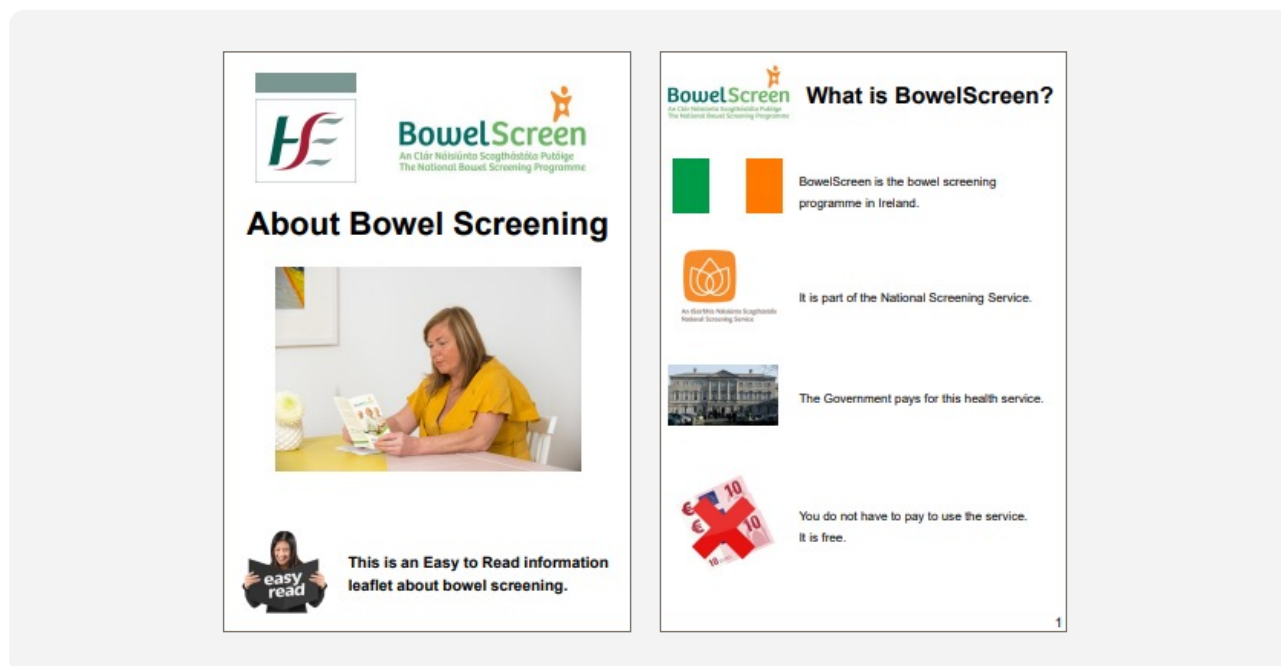


Figure 5: BowelScreen easy-read leaflet



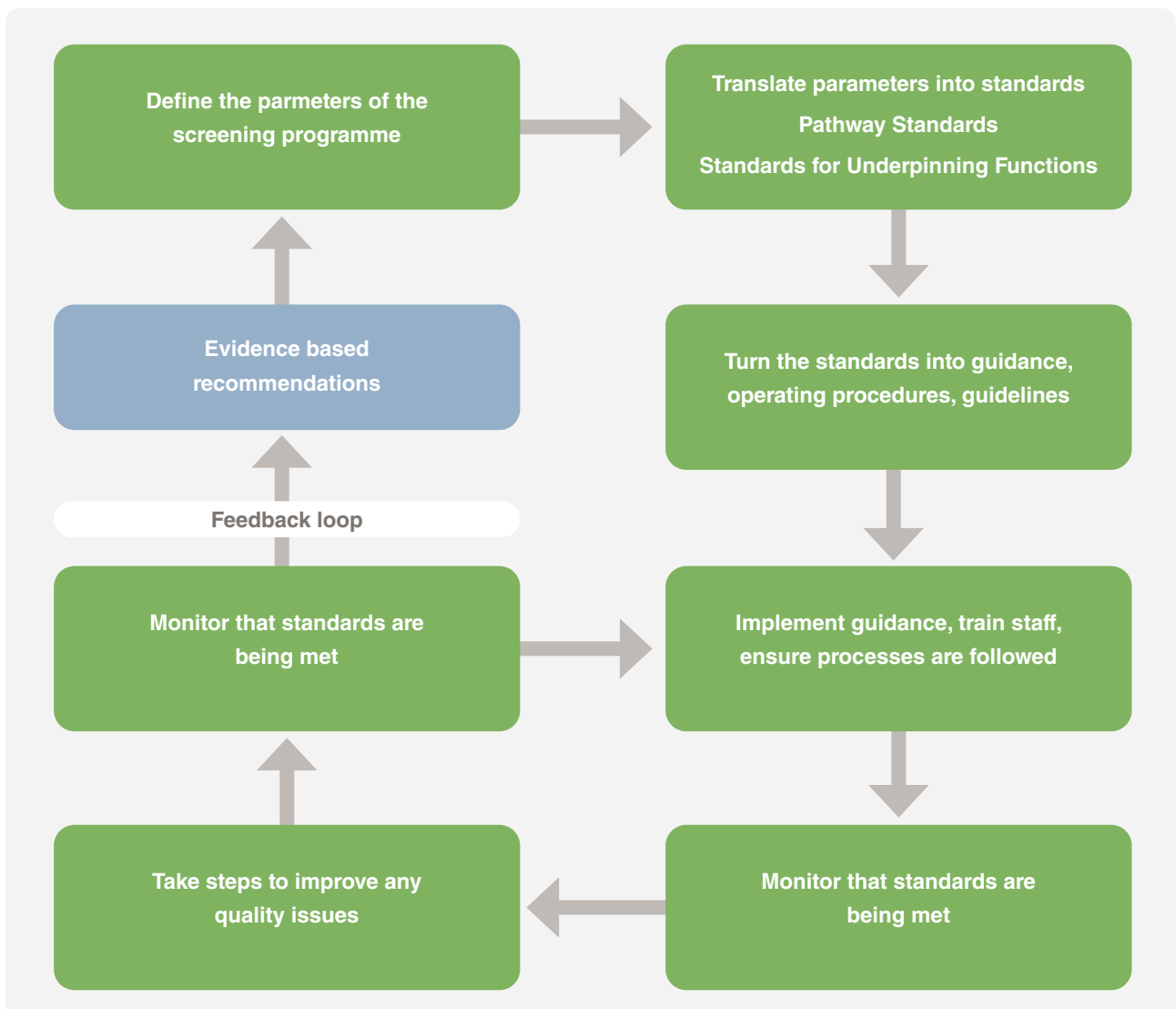
Goal 2

Improving the quality of programmes

Strengthening quality assurance

The project to strengthen quality assurance (QA) focused on ensuring a systems-approach to QA. A QA Policy Framework was drafted and approved during 2021, this completed the first phase of the project. Phase two is looking at where the quality assurance programmes in NSS can be strengthened and standardised. This will include a process for developing and updating standards, creating consistent language and supporting QA developments such as QA visits to screening providers.

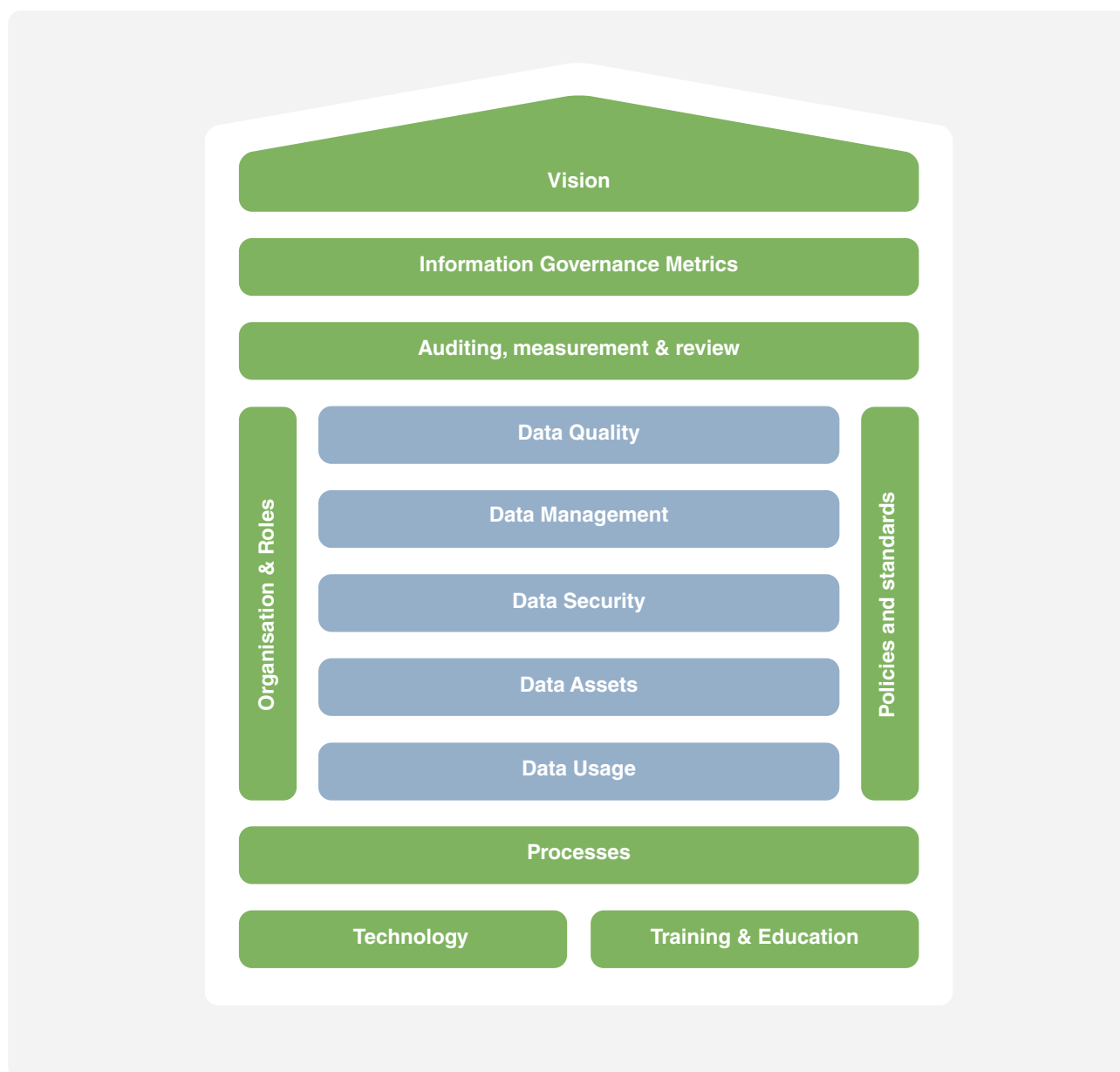
Figure 5: Running a high-quality screening programme. Adapted from *Screening Programmes, a short guide*, WHO 2020



Information Governance

Thorough oversight of information governance (IG) is required in NSS in order to ensure we are compliant with legislation. Under the governance of a project steering group, both a desktop exercise and a HIQA Information Governance Self-Assessment were completed, which has helped to inform the development of a high-level implementation plan. This plan has now been approved. An IG lead is progressing through recruitment to take this work forward during 2022.

Figure 5: Information governance requirements



Patient and Public Partnership (PPP)

The NSS published a PPP Strategy in 2019. Since then, significant progress has been made with its implementation. An effective, diverse and representative PPP panel has been established through regular open recruitment, ensuring representation from marginalised communities. The group has been supported by the Public Health Team and an operational plan is being developed. Identification of permanent structures was underway at year-end and this is supported by the development of a PPP framework and supporting tools and templates. In addition to this, patient experience surveys were established as a standalone project and a training needs assessment was commenced in 2021.

Figure 7: Graphic artist's PPP workshop output



Text Message Feasibility Study

The Public Health Department collaborated with the Health Behaviour Change Research Group, in NUI Galway to explore the feasibility of text message reminders to invite women for cervical screening. The project included:

- Consider international evidence to see how effective text message reminders are at increasing cervical screening update and to see if they are possible and acceptable within the CervicalCheck programme
- Comparing different options for text message reminders to see if they are practical, effective, cost-effective and acceptable
- Working with the Patient and Public Partnership and conducting interviews with stakeholders
- Making recommendations to implement text messages in CervicalCheck
- Presenting findings to CervicalCheck staff and wider NSS staff

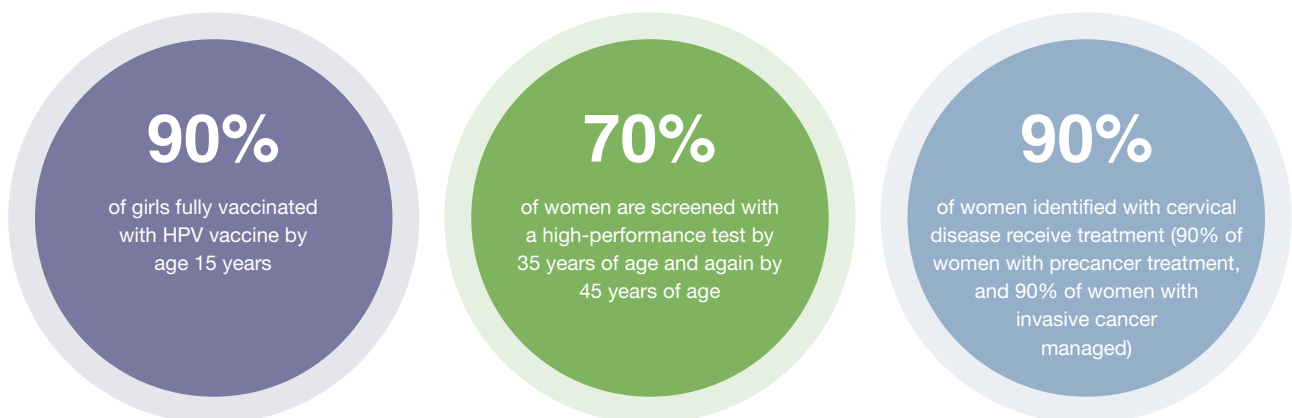
Goal 3

Improving Population Health

Elimination of Cervical Cancer

In 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) outlined a strategy for the elimination of cervical cancer through the achievement of targets set out under three key areas, i.e. HPV vaccinations, engagement in screening, and treatment of pre-cancers and invasive cancers.

Figure 8: WHO's cervical cancer elimination figures



A key objective in the NSS Public Health Operational Plan was to establish a collaborative group, with representatives from the National Immunisation Office (NIO), National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) and the National Cancer Registry Ireland (NCRI), to take strategic actions towards the elimination of cervical cancer in Ireland. The NSS Public Health team are also working with cervical cancer researchers from the Daffodil Centre in New South Wales, Australia. Using their Policy 1-Cervix model, the researchers will input Irish immunisation, screening and cancer incidence, survival and mortality rates into the model to accurately predict Ireland's elimination timeline.

By year end, the key achievements were:

- Discussions and scoping of options regarding modelling for the elimination of cervical cancer commenced
- Stakeholder alliance established
- Governance agreed with the Department of Health
- The contract for the modelling project was progressed

- An internal working group and a wider stakeholder group (with the National Immunisation Office, the National Cancer Control Programme and the National Cancer Registry Ireland) were established
- Ministerial statement of intent on Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action (November 2021)
- NSS media statements released on Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action outlining plans for joint projects
- Key databases collated and strategic and working groups established

Information Hub

The Public Health and Communications teams are partnering on a new project called the Information Hub (working title) which is trialing new ways of working and new processes for communications content development. The purpose of the Hub is to ensure screening communications are centred on improving the experience of service users and patients, and are consistent across screening programmes. Central to the processes being applied are public and patient involvement, standardisation of processes and user testing. The new function is being piloted for a six-month period after which it will be externally evaluated. The Hub will implement the evaluation recommendations and begin the transition process during 2022.

Figure 9: Information Hub infographic explaining how the Hub will work



Health Promotion Activities

Some key activities that the Health Promotion Team focused on were:

- Development of programme factsheets in accessible format e.g. easy-read and in various languages
- Training and webinars for various audiences including peer health advocates, NSS staff, ICS nurses, colleges (NUIG), GP Trainees
- Participation and engagement with various partners including Men's Health Promotion Officers, Pavee Point, Traveller Healthcare Workers, Marie Keating Foundation, Irish Cancer Society, Camogie Association, NCCP

Access Officer Role

The role of the access officers in the NSS is to provide, or arrange for, and co-ordinate the provision of assistance and guidance to disabled people to access the screening services; and generally to act as a point of contact for disabled people wishing to access screening. Members of Public Health Team are access officers for three of the screening programmes, BreastCheck, BowelScreen and Diabetic Retinopathy. Recent work includes:

- Update of the BreastCheck access content on the HSE website
- Development of a BreastCheck commitment to disability document
- Visually impaired women will receive their BreastCheck information in braille. The National Council for the Blind are supporting this work.
- BreastCheck letters and leaflets are available in large font
- Updating of a leaflet to support people to avail of breast screening

For further information; click [here](#)

The Year Ahead

The Public Health team will progress many of the projects from 2021 including:

Patient and Public Partnership (PPP)

Elimination of Cervical Cancer

Information Governance

Equity in Screening

Projects that will be commenced or progressed in a more significant manner include:



Information Hub



QA Policy Framework



Assisted Decision Making



Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMS)



Relationship with the National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC)



HPV Immunisation Data Transfer to the Cervical Screening Register



Training and Education



HPV vaccination for women under 45 treated for CIN2+ at colposcopy



Stakeholder engagement strategy

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

The achievements set out herein 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 look forward to working with you in the future.



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