

Operational Plan 2022

The National Screening Service (NSS) operational plan sets out our high-level aims for 2022. The plan incorporates ongoing multi-annual projects and initiatives from 2021, in addition to the strategic and operational objectives set for 2022. We are working on **17 priority areas for action 2022**. The plan has detail of the work taking place across the four programmes and nine departments of the NSS. The plan is available [here](#).

Interval Cancer Report Implementation

Our working groups continue to progress their specific implementation plans.

- The **CervicalCheck** group is finalising the design of patient-requested reviews and disclosure processes. We have consulted with women diagnosed with an interval cervical cancer. We are incorporating their recommendations into the review and disclosure design process.
- The **BreastCheck** group has strengthened its established patient-requested review process. Data retention and disposal policies have been set up to comply with GDPR. Recommendation seven of the [BreastCheck ERG](#) report is fully implemented.
- The **BowelScreen** group has implemented recommendations three and four arising from the [BowelScreen ERG](#) report. All national endoscopy units have been informed of the new form to record PCCRCs from non-NCRI sources.

All above implementation groups continue to work closely with the NCRI / NSS Strategic Planning Group to progress the calculation of interval cancer rates.

- The **Legal Framework** group is finalising an interim legal report. Three pieces of research are ongoing in the areas of law, health ethics and health economics. The research will provide the evidence base to support the development of the final recommendations.
- The **Communications Interval Cancer Implementation** group has concluded its three-stage research project to determine the attitudes and knowledge of the public towards screening. A summary report of all research findings is published [here](#). An action plan has been signed off and is being implemented by NSS. The actions support the wider HSE's Trust and Confidence Action Plan.

Collaboration with International Agency for Research on Cancer

The National Screening Service, Department of Health, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organisation, are preparing **strategic guidance on best practices** related to cervical cancer screening implementation. The collaboration aims to:

- develop best practices for conducting cancer audits in cervical cancer screening programmes
- emphasise good practices and key considerations including a checklist for transparent & pragmatic communication with the public, service providers and other stakeholders
- develop best practices and a legal framework that will better safeguard the interests of screening participants, providers, and managers.

The best practices information is being developed by three working groups along with a stakeholder advisory group. The work involves patient and public representatives, members of academia and international screening experts, and is aligned to the NSS Interval Cancer project.

BreastCheck

- We have added a **new mobile unit to facilitate screening appointments** around the country and commissioned a further two units. We are engaged in ongoing recruitment for radiographers to join the BreastCheck programme in 2022.
- In January this year we began to implement a new **Client & Radiology Information System (CRIS)**. The system will help us monitor uptake and increase equity in screening.
- We continue to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on breast screening and the screening pathway.
- The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is carrying out research to learn more about the relationship between breast density and breast cancer in Ireland. We are working with the RCSI on this research. The research will help us understand if breast density has a role in breast screening in Ireland. You can read more about the research [here](#).
- We will begin screening women in the South Tipperary area from 20 June 2022. Women who are eligible will receive their letter of invitation over the next few months.
- In previous years this screening round has taken place in Clonmel at various locations in the grounds of South Tipperary General Hospital. However, in response to feedback from women using the service, this location has now been changed. This breast screening round will instead take place in HSE Primary Care Centre Cahir, Rosemount Close, Barnora, Cahir, Co. Tipperary, E21 KF83.
- The facility offers those attending for screening the following:
 - Comprehensive onsite free parking facilities close to the mobile unit
 - Easy access to the site by car, bus and train
- Women who have additional queries or who are unable to attend screening in Cahir can contact BreastCheck and we will aim to find the most suitable location, date and time for them to attend. Contact 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

CervicalCheck

- We published our **CervicalCheck Programme Report 2017-March 2020** in early April 2022. It provides a statistical overview of the final years of Ireland's cytology-based population screening programme, which ended on 30 March 2020 with the advent of HPV cervical screening. You can read the report [here](#).
- Dr Caroline Mason Mohan, Director of Public Health, has detailed our experience of **running a screening programme during a global pandemic** in a recent blog. You can read about this [here](#).
- Our results turnaround times which had been affected by COVID-19 returned to four-week standard in early 2022. National follow-up colposcopy invite times are also **meeting our target turnaround times**.

BowelScreen

- We are planning to begin **expanding bowel screening to all people aged 55 to 74**. This is part of our commitment in Ireland's National Cancer Strategy. Read more about BowelScreen's age extension [here](#).
- Our new **patient experience survey** is asking people about their recent experience using the FIT home test and their colonoscopy (if they had one). The survey will test the feasibility of using SMS messaging to capture real-time patient experience. Read more about the survey [here](#).
- A new **animated video** about bowel screening is available [here](#).

Diabetic RetinaScreen

- The first full year of the **2-yearly screening pathway** is now complete. Preliminary results are positive.
- Treatment clinics continue to be impacted by the cyber attack. Many are now updating patient information from 2021 on the information management system.
- A new **animated video** explaining the diabetic retina screening process is available [here](#).

NSS strategy development

One of the National Screening Service's key objectives in 2022 is to **develop a strategy that will set our direction for the coming years**. Our strategy development began in Q1 and will continue across the summer months. You can read about our strategy [here](#). Further information on the strategy is available from nss.strategy@screeningservice.ie

National Cervical Screening Laboratory

Construction of the new laboratory is due to be completed in the second quarter of 2022. The laboratory is due to be operational in quarter three of 2022. The new laboratory is designed to become the principal provider of cervical screening laboratory services for the NSS.

Workforce capacity is the key limiting factor for full establishment of the laboratory. A medium-to-long term workforce plan is being developed to address the workforce resilience risk.

Information governance

We are enhancing our practice around **data protection and information governance** and taking steps to improve our transparency and accountability around how we process personal data at the NSS. We have recently recruited an Information Governance Manager to strengthen our controls around information management.

Programme Evaluation Unit (PEU)

PEU's core work is data provision for internal and external stakeholders.

- The unit has contributed to the recent publication of **BowelScreen and CervicalCheck Programme Reports** and provides data for HSE and service planning.
- We published **three peer-reviewed articles, and presented six posters at two conferences between November 2021 and May 2022**. The conferences included the Irish Association for Cancer Research (IACR) annual meeting, 2022, in Cork; and The British Society for Colposcopy & Cervical Pathology (BSCCP) Annual Scientific Meeting in Belfast in May 2022, where a poster detailing the impact of the events of 2018 on the CervicalCheck programme won the Best Poster award.
- Two of our peer-reviewed articles included '*Screen-detected ductal carcinoma in situ, 2008–2020: An observational study*' and '*Interval cancer audit and disclosure in cervical screening programmes: an international survey*'.

Public Health

Cervical Cancer Elimination

A strategic partnership between NIO, NCCP, NCRI and NSS has been established to work towards elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem in Ireland, aligned to the WHO strategy.

- Modelling has commenced to set a date for elimination of cervical cancer.
- The strategic partnership is being broadened to include additional stakeholders with an interest in elimination.
- The group will work towards a launch on 17 November 2022.

221+ Consultation

A co-designed consultation with 221+ women has concluded. The aim was to ensure their experience informed future improvements to audit and disclosure.

Information Hub

The Information Hub programme is nearing the end of its pilot phase. The Hub has focused on new, enhanced processes for the creation of public information. An external evaluator will produce a report on the effectiveness of processes applied in the Hub and make recommendations for its next phase.

Equity Strategic Framework

We are developing an Equity Strategic Framework with a steering group including the Institute of Public Health.

Our December report, *Working to Reduce Inequity in Screening 2021*, details the variety of projects we have undertaken to improve access and improve outcomes for people who use our services.

Quality, Safety and Risk (QSR)

- We are implementing **staff-driven training to strengthen risk management** in the NSS, which is aligned with the HSE Integrated Risk Management Policy.
- We led a streamlined process for NSS responses to the **HSE Controls Assurance Review Process (CARP) 2022** which delivered an 84% increase in the participation rate.
- Shared learning processes have been put in place to help establish a consistent approach to **organisation-wide learning from incidents**, as recommended by the HSE Incident Management Framework.

Patient Public Partnership (PPP)

The PPP strategy exists to ensure we **work in partnership with patients and public**, involving them in decision making and making sure we are working towards providing **person-centred care**.

What has been achieved so far and what developments are in the pipeline...

Our **Progress Report** looks back at the actions and projects completed over the past two years since our strategy was launched. To read our Progress Report click [here](#).

Communications

- We are developing a **new NSS corporate website to provide news and updates** on screening to the public, media, elected representatives, healthcare professionals and researchers at home and abroad. We have completed research with users to help plan the concept and content of our website and have developed new content and a website framework.
- We are working to promote a better understanding of the screening services we provide. To mark **Cervical Cancer Prevention Week 2022** we produced a simple guide to writing about cervical screening in Ireland. This guide is for journalists, broadcasters, commentators, bloggers academics and all those producing news and commentary on cervical screening in Ireland. You can read our guide [here](#).
- At the end of 2021 we completed a large research project to help us understand how people in Ireland feel about screening. Read more about our research on '**Exploring and understanding perceptions of screening services in Ireland**' [here](#).
- We conducted two largescale campaigns in 2022

CervicalCheck targeted campaign

A new CervicalCheck radio ad campaign launched on 14 March, focusing on women and people with a cervix aged 50-65, and 25-65 year olds in certain counties that have low uptake of HPV cervical screening.

BowelScreen – Bowel cancer awareness month

April was Bowel Cancer Awareness Month and BowelScreen had campaign activity across radio, press ads and social media. The aim of the campaign was to increase knowledge around bowel screening and address barriers to doing the test, encouraging 60-69 year olds to participate in screening.