

A guide to help Patient and Public Partnership Representatives understand technical language and terms used in the National Screening Service.

The National Screening Service (NSS) uses medical and technical words that are difficult to understand. Many people do not hear or use those words and phrases every day.

We have produced this guide for Patient and Public Partnership Network Representatives. It explains some of these words and phrases.

If you are at a meeting and have not heard the word or term before, ask someone to explain it in everyday language.

If you would like to add other terms or words to our list, please email us at: ppplead@screeningservice.ie

Colour coding to identify which programme the term is linked to:
BowelScreen
BreastCheck
CervicalCheck
Diabetic RetinaScreen
General/ All Programmes



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	Acronym	Full title	Meaning/ explanation
1.	ADM Act	Assisted Decision Making Act 2015	<p>The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 is a law that supports people to make their own decisions. It is for people who face difficulties in making decisions and need help to make decisions. It is also for people who want to plan ahead for a time when they might lose their capacity to make decisions.</p> <p>For more information, please see here:</p> <p>https://decisionsupportservice.ie/sites/default/files/2023-05/DSS%20Easy%20Read%20-%20May%202023.pdf</p> <p>https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/national-office-human-rights-equality-policy/assisted-decision-making-capacity-act/</p>
2.		Biopsy	A specialist doctor takes a small sample of tissue or cells from an area to examine it under a microscope to check for cell changes.
3.		Benign	Not harmful. Not cancer. This term is sometimes used for low grade, slower growing tumours, which rarely spread.
4.	BS	BowelScreen	The national bowel screening programme. The programme aims to detect signs of bowel cancer at an early stage, when there are no symptoms. Bowel cancer is also



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			known as colon, rectal or colorectal cancer. BowelScreen offers free bowel screening to men and women within the eligible age range. Screening involves taking a sample of your poo (stool sample) using a home test . We can post the test to you. For more information on BowelScreen please see our website https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/bowel-screening/screening-information/
5.	BC	BreastCheck	The national breast screening programme. The programme aims to find breast cancer early, and to provide treatment of breast cancer in women who show no symptoms of the disease. The programme offers all women between the ages of 50 and 69 a mammogram (an x-ray of the breast) free of charge every two years. For more information of BreastCheck please see our website https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/breast-screening/information/
6.	CC	CervicalCheck	The national cervical screening programme. The programme aims to reduce the number of people in Ireland who develop cervical cancer. The target groups are women and people with a cervix, aged 25 to 65 years. A cervical screening test is a free test performed by your GP or Practice nurse to check the health of your cervix. The cervix is the opening to your womb from your vagina. It's not a test for cancer, it's a test to see if you are at risk of developing cancer. For more information, please see our website https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/cervical-screening/why-go/



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7.		Cervix	The lower, narrow end of the uterus (entry to the womb) that forms a canal between the uterus and vagina.
8.	CIN	Cervical Intraepithelial Neoplasia	Term used in cervical screening. They are abnormal changes of the cells that line the cervix. Cell changes are not cancer but a change which may go back to normal by itself or require treatment to remove them. There are three grades of CIN: CIN 1, CIN 2 or CIN 3. CIN 3 being the most severe.
9.	CS	Client Services	A unit in the NSS (National Screening Service) that provides a standardised approach to Subject Access Requests (A subject access request is a request made by an individual to access their personal information that is held by an organisation) made under the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations 2016 (GDPR) and Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI).
10		Clinical Audit	A process that aims to improve patient care and outcomes by reviewing the care provided by health care staff. It lets staff and patients know what is going well, and where improvements could be made. The audit aims to improve care when standards are not met. To find out more, please refer to HSE Clinical Audit Guide: https://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/nqpsd/featured-articles/clinical-audit-a-practical-guide-2023/



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11		Consent	<p>Consent is the giving of permission or agreement for a treatment, investigation, or the receipt or use of a service or participation in research or teaching. Consent involves a process of communication about the proposed intervention in which the person has received sufficient information to enable them to understand the nature, potential risks and benefits of the proposed intervention. Consent also allows an organisation to receive, hold and exchange an individual's personal information and screening history with those who deliver a screening programme. Seeking consent should usually occur as an ongoing process rather than a one-off event.</p> <p>For more information on consent, please see the HSE website.</p> <p>https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/national-office-human-rights-equality-policy/consent/</p>
12	CMT	Corporate Management Team	Monthly meeting of NSS senior managers.
13		Cohort	A group of people who share a common trait, such as birth year, gender, etc.



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14		Colonoscopy	A colonoscopy is an examination of your bowel using a small camera on the end of a thin flexible tube, The tube is inserted into your bottom and passed through the rectum into the large bowel.
15		Communications (Comms) Team	Team in the NSS that co-ordinates communication activity. The team works with the wider HSE Digital, Media and Campaigns divisions. It is responsible for responding to media queries, Parliamentary Questions and queries from members of the public.
16	CHO	Community Healthcare Organisation	Organisation responsible for delivering on behalf of the HSE, community healthcare services. Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs) cover services including primary care, social care, mental health, and health and wellbeing. These are services not provided by the acute hospitals
17		Colorectal	Referring to the large bowel, specifically the colon and rectum.
18	CRC	Colorectal cancer	A cancer that starts in the colon, or the rectum. It can also be called colon cancer or rectal cancer, depending on where it starts.
19		Colposcopy	A colposcopy is an examination to look at your cervix. Your cervix is the opening to your womb from your vagina. A colposcopy helps a specialist doctor or nurse (colposcopist) to



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			confirm if cells in your cervix are abnormal. Sometimes a biopsy (small piece of tissue) can be taken. This will help decide if you need treatment to remove the cells.
20		Co-production	Co-production is a way of working that involves people who use our services in equal partnership and engages with them at the earliest stages of service design, implementation and evaluation.
21		Cytology (cervical screening test)	A sample of cells from the cervix are gathered during a vaginal examination and sent to a laboratory where they are checked using a high-power microscope. The test was called a 'smear' test. The sample was spread on a glass slide and the cells were looked at by a cytologist. This test was replaced as the first (primary) cervical screening test in March 2020 by the HPV test. Cytology is still performed on HPV positive tests (secondary test) to look at the cells to see if the virus is causing changes
22	DCIS	Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS)	This is when the cells that line the milk ducts of the breast become cancer, but they have not yet spread into the breast tissue. DCIS may never cause symptoms of harm to the person who has it. We don't know who may be harmed and who won't so everyone gets offered treatment.
23		Diabetes	Diabetes can be a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high.



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			<p>Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune condition. This is where the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells that produce insulin. Type 1 diabetes causes the level of glucose(sugar) in your blood to become too high. Type 2 diabetes is a condition that causes the level of glucose (sugar) in the blood to become higher than normal. It can be serious if not looked after, but it is very treatable. For some people it can be prevented or delayed.</p> <p>For more information, please see the HSE website https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/diabetes/</p>
24		Diabetic retinopathy	<p><u>Diabetic retinopathy</u> is a complication of diabetes that affects the small blood vessels at the back of the eye, in an area called the retina. A healthy retina is necessary for good eyesight. If you have diabetes, the blood vessels in the retina become thicker, and the blood flowing in the blood vessels slows down. In the early stages, diabetic retinopathy will not affect your sight. But if the changes get worse, your sight will be affected.</p>
25	DRS	Diabetic RetinaScreen	<p>The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme is a programme that offers free, regular diabetic retinopathy screening to people over the age of 12 who have diabetes. This test takes a picture of the back of the eye. We aim to detect and treat diabetic retinopathy as early as we can to help us reduce damage to your sight. For more</p>



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			information of Diabetic RetinaScreen please see our website https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/diabetic-retina-screening/
26		Diabetic retina screening test	<p>Diabetic retinopathy eye screening uses specialised digital photography to look for changes that could affect your sight. Regular eye screening can detect diabetic retinopathy before you notice any changes in your sight.</p> <p>A way of detecting changes to the small blood vessels in the lining at the back of the eye, involving a photo taken of the eyes with a digital camera. If diabetic eye disease is found early, treatment can reduce or prevent damage to the person's sight. The longer a person has had diabetes, the more likely they are to develop diabetic retinopathy.</p>
27		Diagnostic test	A type of test used to help diagnose a disease or a condition. For example, a colonoscopy test can be used to diagnose a bowel cancer or a colposcopy for further assessment after an abnormal cervical screening test. A diagnostic test might follow a screening test if a closer look is required.
28		Digital surveillance eye screening	Digital surveillance eye screening is where your eyes are monitored more frequently than once a year, but you do not need treatment yet. Your screenings are similar to the tests you have had before.



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29	DOH	Department of Health	A government department supporting the Minister for Health, and ministers of state, in developing and implementing health services. It also monitors the HSE's performance.
30		Eligible people	Eligible people are those that meet the criteria to be offered screening. For example, the eligible people for breast screening are all women aged 50-69 years old
31	EMT	Executive Management Team	Committee comprising NSS senior management team and all clinical directors.
32	ERG	Expert Reference Group	Group established to make recommendations from interval cancers audits. For more information please see website https://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/nss/news/expert-reference-group-interval-cancer-reports/
33		False Negative	There is a possibility a person can be told they do not have an abnormality when in fact they do have an abnormality which was not detected by the screening test. This is why it is important that people see their GP without delay if they have any symptoms that could indicate cancer, even if they recently had a negative/normal screening test.



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			No screening test is 100% accurate. All population-based screening programme have some false negative and false positive screening results.
34		False Positive	There is a possibility a person can be told after a screening test that they have an abnormality when in fact they do not have an abnormality. This may lead to the person receiving further tests or treatment and experiencing worry or anxiety.
35	FIT test	Faecal Immunochemical Test	Also known as ' home screening test ' or 'home test kit'. The FIT test is a simple way to check for small amounts of blood in your poo (stool). A stool sample is collected by the person by scraping a sampling stick on your stool until the end of the stick is covered. This sample is sent to the lab in a special tube that is placed in a pre-paid envelope. This test looks for blood in your poo. If the amount of blood found in your poo is above the screening limit, you will be referred for a further test called a colonoscopy .
36	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations	Legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in the European Union https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/data_protection/overview_of_general_data_protection_regulation.html
37		Health Equity	Health equity is when everyone has the same opportunity to be as healthy as possible.



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38		Health inequity	Differences in health, wellbeing and access to services, experienced by different groups in a community which are avoidable, and therefore held to be unacceptable.
39	HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority	An independent authority established to drive high-quality and safe care for people using health and social care services in Ireland.
40	HPV	Human Papillomavirus	Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the name of a very common group of viruses. 9 in 10 cervical cancers are caused by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is spread through any kind of sexual contact with a man or a woman. HPV that doesn't go away is called persistent HPV. This can cause changes to the cells of the cervix over time. But HPV is not the only cause of cervical cancer. You can get cervical cancer if you have never had sex.
41		HPV test	A cervical screening test is a free test to check the health of your cervix. It tests for the presence human papilloma virus subtypes in the cervical cell sample. It is the test used by the cervical screening programme. During cervical screening, a small sample of cells is taken from the cervix and tested for HPV. It's not a test for cancer, it's a test to see if you are at risk of developing cancer.



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42		Incidence	The number of new cases of a disease that occurs in a given period in a specified population.
43	IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer	International government agency forming part of the World Health Organization of the United Nations. Its role is to perform and organise research into the causes of cancer. It also collects and publishes information on the occurrence of cancers across the world. For more information, please see the website https://www.iarc.who.int/
44	ICT or IT	Information and Communications Technologies or Information Technologies	Information and Communications Technologies or Information Technologies. In the NSS we have an ICT Department who are responsible for computer and communications hardware and software.
45		Interval cancer (cervical)	If cervical cancer is found in between your cervical screening tests, we call this interval cancer. This is because it is found in the interval between your previous test and your next test. Interval cancers are not common. But they happen in every screening programme, They are unavoidable and are one of the main limitations of cervical screening . You can still develop cervical cancer even if your cervical screening test does not find HPV or abnormal cells changes. This is why having regular cervical screening tests is important .



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46		Interval cancer (bowel)	Colorectal cancer detected within 36 months of the last colonoscopy, (reported as normal or completion of the surgical removal of a polyp)
47		Interval cancer (breast)	An invasive primary breast cancer case occurring within 2 years of a negative (normal) screening result-
48	KPI	Key performance indicator	A metric used to help an organisation define and measure progress toward organisational goals or standards.
49		Malignant	Harmful. When a tumour is described as malignant, it means that it is cancerous.
50		Mammography	An x-ray of the breast used to find breast cancer when it is too small to see or feel.
51	MDT	Multi-disciplinary team	An MDT is a team of different medical specialists combining their skills to help people. It includes professionals such as nurses, doctors, social workers and psychologists.
52		Metastasis	The spread of cancer from one part of the body to another.
53	NCRI	National Cancer Registry Ireland	An organisation in Ireland that collects, classifies and publishes information on all cancer cases that occur in Ireland. For more information, please see here https://www.ncri.ie/



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54	NCSL	National Cervical Screening Laboratory	The NCSL at the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital (CWIUH) was designed to be a national centre of excellence for cervical screening. It was commissioned by Ireland's cervical screening programme, CervicalCheck, to process women's cervical screening samples. You can read more about the NCSL here https://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/nss/news/nctl-processing-cervicalcheck-samples/
55	NDED	Non-Diabetic Eye Disease	This is an eye disease other than diabetic retinopathy that may be found during DRS screening.
56	NSAC	National Screening Advisory Committee	The independent advisory committee that advises the Minister and Department of Health on proposals for population-based screening programmes, and changes to existing programmes. For more information, please see here https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/nsac/
57	NSS	National Screening Service	Part of the HSE, the organisation responsible for the four national population-based screening programmes: BowelScreen, BreastCheck, Diabetic RetinaScreen and CervicalCheck. For more information, please see here https://www2.healthservice.hse.ie/organisation/nss/
58		Over-diagnosis	Diagnosing conditions that would never have caused the person any symptoms or problems. For example, ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS). This is when the cells that line



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			<p>the milk ducts of the breast become cancer, but they have not spread into the breast tissue. DCIS may never cause symptoms or harm to the person who has it. We don't know who may be harmed and who won't so everyone gets offered treatment. Detecting DCIS through screening may therefore result in overdiagnosis, and this may in turn result in overtreatment</p>
59		Over-investigation	<p>When medical diagnostic investigations are carried out on low-risk people</p>
60		Overtreatment	<p>'Unnecessary treatment for a condition that is not life-threatening or would never cause any symptoms. Overtreatment may lead to problems and harmful side effects. Overtreatment can be a result of overdiagnosis, which occurs when a cancer screening test finds a lesion that would have gone away on its own or not caused problems.' (NIH)</p>
61		'Pap smear' or 'smear test'	<p>This term is no longer used by CervicalCheck. It refers to the Pap test which is a method of cervical screening used to detect potentially precancerous and cancerous processes in the cervix. A sample of cells from the cervix were 'smeared' - or spread - on a glass slide and checked under a microscope. This test was replaced as the primary cervical screening test in March 2020 by the HPV test.</p>



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62	PEU	Programme Evaluation Unit	Unit in the NSS comprising epidemiologists, researchers and statisticians, responsible for data and reporting. The PEU conducts research in the NSS to help promote the NSS screening programmes internationally, and to do research relevant to the screening programmes' core activities.
63	PH	Public Health	Unit in the NSS, that develops health promotion strategies in the screening population. It monitors population health, addressing risks and education, and promoting equity in screening.
64		Bowel Polyp	Polyps are small growths that are not cancer but, if not removed, might turn into cancer over time.
65	PPP	Patient and Public Partnership	Panel for patient and public involvement in NSS decision making. The NSS Patient and Public Partnership Strategy has three strategic priorities: Empower patients and the public to play an active role in NSS; embed partnership working in the NSS; and strengthen accountability, assurance and learning. For more information, please read our PPP Strategy: https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/qid/person-family-engagement/patient-and-public-partnership/patient-and-public-partnership-strategy-2019-2023.pdf



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66		Prevalence	Prevalence is defined as the proportion of persons in a defined population at a given point in time with the condition in question (includes both new and existing cases).
67	QA	Quality Assurance	QA is the process of checking that standards are met and encouraging continuous improvement. Assuring and driving up the quality of services is essential if population screening is to achieve the intended benefits to population health, while minimising unintended harms to those taking part. Quality assurance processes make sure providers meet and maintain the minimum requirements for each programme.
68	QRSM	Quality Safety and Risk Management	Unit in the NSS responsible for optimising screening outcomes for service users through quality improvement, promoting a culture of safety, integrated risk management, and data protection.
69	RHA	Regional Health Areas	The HSE is working on delivering care through new Regional Health Authorities (RHAs). RHA will include primary and community care (e.g., public health nursing, care for older people, GP, etc.) and acute hospital care (large hospitals). For more information, please read here: https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/news/staff-news-listing-page/latest-updates-on-regional-health-areas-in-the-hse/
70		Routine recall	We will invite participants for a repeat screening at set timings when your previous screening test was normal.



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71	Screening	Screening checks healthy people who may have an increased chance of a disease or condition. Screening is a pathway that starts with finding the population eligible for screening and ends with treatment for people who have a disease or condition. Most people who have a normal screening test result are invited back within an agreed time to be screened again. Screening is not a diagnostic test
72	Screening participants	We call people who attend for NSS screening services participants.
73	Screen positive	The screening test result shows that a person has an increased chance of the having the condition being screened for and needs further tests. Not everyone who screens positive will need intervention and treatment. Some will have a negative diagnostic test and go to normal recall (see routine recall definition above)
74	Screen negative	The screening test result shows that a person has a low chance (but not no chance) of having the condition being screened for and goes back to normal recall (see routine recall definition above).
75	Sensitivity	Sensitivity is how good the test is at correctly picking up someone with the condition. The better the sensitivity is, the lower the rate of people who get a negative result but later develop the condition (false negative)



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76		Squamous carcinoma (cervical)	The term for the most common type of cervical cancer, which is around 75% of cases.
77	SBP	Strategy, Business and Projects Department	NSS Department that supports our strategy and business development. It also coordinates our service improvement projects.
78	SME	Subject Matter Expert	A person with knowledge and expertise in a specific area.
79	SMT	Senior Management Team	Team of senior managers of a NSS programmes and functions.
80	SDoH	Social Determinants of Health	The social determinants of health (SDH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which you are born, grow up, work, live, and age, and the wider things that shape your daily life.



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81		Specificity	Specificity is how good the test is at correctly identifying the people who do not have the condition. The better the specificity is, the lower the rate of people who are sent for diagnostic tests when they don't have the condition (false positive).
82		Speculum	A smooth tube- shaped tool that is placed into your vagina to hold the walls of the vagina open during your cervical screening test.
83		Stakeholder	any group or person who is affected by or can help achieve an organisation's aims and objectives
84	STDR	Sight Threatening Diabetic Retinopathy	A complication of diabetes that causes damage to the back of the eye (retina). It is caused by high blood glucose (sugar) levels and can cause blindness if left undiagnosed and untreated. NSS screens for diabetic retinopathy in its Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Service
85	TOR	Terms of reference	A document that outlines the purpose and structures of a project, or committee that has agreed to work together to accomplish a shared goal. Each committee should have a Terms of Reference document that, at a minimum, describes the purpose of the committee and who is in charge of making decisions
86		Uptake	Uptake is the percentage of people who receive an adequate screen (a definitive test result) within a specified time frame after their screening test.



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