



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

17 November 2021

National Screening Service joint project brings Ireland closer to realising target of cervical cancer elimination

HSE marks Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action

Today, to mark global Cervical Cancer Elimination Day of Action (17 November 2021), the National Screening Service – in partnership with our key stakeholders – is highlighting a joint project that will bring Ireland closer to realising the aim of eliminating cervical cancer.

In January 2022, the National Screening Service; National Immunisation Office (NIO); National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP); and National Cancer Registry of Ireland (NCRI) will begin working with academics in Australia to develop a model to work towards cervical cancer elimination in Ireland. This will involve using Irish data - for example, on screening uptake and HPV vaccine uptake - to tailor the model for our population and allow Ireland to set a target date for elimination of cervical cancer. The NSS has established a working group with the NIO, NCCP and NCRI to work with the Australian team on this important project.

The model will give the HSE pointers on how to work towards elimination. This will include improving uptake of cervical screening and HPV vaccination to make sure no groups in our society gets left behind. It will also advise on how both programmes can adapt and evolve to support the earliest elimination target possible. This will ensure Ireland continues to deliver the high-quality programmes to as many people who are due HPV vaccination and/or screening as possible.

Every year in Ireland about 300 people get cervical cancer and 90 women die from it. Almost 150 of women diagnosed with cervical cancer are diagnosed in screening. In women aged 25 to 39 years, cervical cancer is the second most common cause of death due to cancer.

Dr Caroline Mason Mohan, Director of Public Health, NSS, said: “I am delighted that the NSS is in a position to make such a significant contribution not only to the health of the people of Ireland but

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An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála Coek
The National Breast Screening Programme



AN CLÁR NAISIÚNTA SCAGTHÁSTÁLA CERIBHEACS
THE NATIONAL CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAMME



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Poblige
The National Bowel Screening Programme



An Clár Náisiúnta Scagthástála Retine do Diaibéiteoirí
The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme



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also to the global effort to eliminate cervical cancer. The forward-thinking implementation of the schools' HPV vaccination programme in 2010, and the HPV primary screening programme in 2020, ahead of many other countries, have put us in a great position to aim for elimination.”

Stephen Donnelly, Minister of Health, welcomed the modelling project, he said: “This is a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to eradicate HPV cancers in Ireland. Australia has already announced its intention to eradicate cervical cancer by 2035. It is my hope that this collaboration will enable Ireland to soon establish its own target date to eliminate this largely preventable disease.”

Dr Lucy Jessop, Director of Public Health at the National Immunisation Office, said: “I really welcome the opportunity to be involved in the global effort to eliminate cervical cancer. A recent study from the UK showed a substantial reduction in cervical cancer since their HPV vaccination programme was introduced, this was especially evident in girls who were vaccinated at 12-13 years.* The more young people vaccinated and women screened the better the spread of the infection can be controlled.

“In Ireland we began our vaccination programme in 2010 by offering HPV vaccine to girls, this programme was extended in September 2019 to offer all students in first year the opportunity to receive HPV vaccine through the HSE school vaccination programme. Our most recent published data shows over 345,000 boys and girls have been fully vaccinated with HPV vaccine to protect them from cervical and other HPV-related cancers when they are older.”**

Dr Nóirín Russell, Clinical Director, CervicalCheck, said the screening programme is in a strong position to take on this challenge: “Thanks to the efforts of our sampletakers and the ongoing high levels of attendance by women invited for cervical screening, CervicalCheck is now back on track after the short pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This, coupled with continued high uptake of the HPV vaccine, means we are perfectly placed to announce our commitment to this elimination strategy.

“Making cervical cancer a rare disease is an exciting goal as this terrible disease has such a devastating impact on women and their families.

“While we work on this very important goal, we would still encourage all those invited to attend their cervical screening appointment, it is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

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Averil Power, Irish Cancer Society CEO, said: “The announcement of this important project is welcome evidence of the progress that is being made to save women from a truly devastating disease. The Irish Cancer Society has been pushing the drive towards eliminating cervical cancer for a number of years, and we now look forward to seeing concrete and life-changing results for the many women this project can help. We cannot forget that HPV also causes other cancers in men and women; including of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus, and oropharynx, and we must use this opportunity to make Ireland a world leader in the effort to eliminate all HPV-caused cancers.”

The 221+ patient support group said: We know the pain and trauma of cervical cancer so anything that contributes to preventing that life sentence for those impacted is a positive step. Screening saves lives. The combination of a renewed and well-managed screening service, with a stronger uptake of the HPV vaccine, makes the prospect of eliminating cervical cancer in Ireland a realistic and achievable goal we can all trust in and work towards.”

Dr Gabriel Scally, said: “The elimination of cervical cancer in Ireland would be an outstanding achievement. It is a goal that is within our grasp and is an essential contribution to improving the health of Irish women. Committing to cervical cancer elimination, and accompanying that commitment with the necessary actions and resources to ensure it is achieved, should be widely and warmly welcomed.”

- Falcaro et al, 2021, [The Lancet](#) The effects of the national HPV vaccination programme in England, UK, on cervical cancer and grade 3 cervical intraepithelial neoplasia incidence: a register-based observational study, **See [HPSC.ie](#) for most recent verified data on HPV vaccine uptake

Useful Information

- In May 2018, the WHO Director-General announced a global call for action to eliminate cervical cancer. In August 2020 the World Health Assembly adopted the [Global Strategy for cervical cancer elimination](#).

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BowelScreen
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Diabetic
RetinaScreen
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- Cervical cancer is preventable and curable, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively. Yet it is the fourth most common form of cancer among women worldwide, with the disease claiming the lives of more than 300 000 women in 2018. ([WHO](#))
- Ireland was also an early adopter of HPV vaccination. The schools programme has delivered a programme to girls in first year of second level since 2010, using a quadrivalent vaccine (against four types of HPV) and since 2019 to all students in first year with a nonavalent vaccine (against nine types of HPV). www.hpv.ie
- Parents of young people in first year should have received a consent form for HPV vaccination in the past 2 months. If they have not received or returned this form, they should contact their local school immunisation team (details at www.hpv.ie) to ensure their child is provided with the maximum protection.
- HPV, Tdap and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time or at any interval between them so parents do not need to delay HPV vaccine if their child has recently had the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The effects of the national HPV vaccination programme in England, UK, on cervical cancer and grade 3 cervical intraepithelial neoplasia incidence: a register-based observational study_ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)02178-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)02178-4/fulltext)

For more information about and to check you're on the register, go to www.hse.ie/cervicalcheck or call Freephone 1800 55 45 45 or contact info@cervicalcheck.ie

Please promote this update on your communication channels such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter:

- **Facebook post:**
<https://www.facebook.com/448165568722125/posts/1744159072456095/?sfnsn=mo>
- **Twitter post:** HSE Ireland (@HSELive) tweeted at 1:15 PM on Wed, Nov 17, 2021:
High uptake of free HPV cervical screening & the HPV vaccine is bringing Ireland closer to realising the aim of eliminating #cervicalcancer. The National Screening Service is working with @HSEImm @IrishCancerReg & @hseNCCP to make this a reality

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<https://t.co/7OFIRqCl2F>

#GlowTeal <https://t.co/6yILc56Y5Z> (<https://twitter.com/HSELive/status/1460959657837711361?t=-gmk2Tk2gf6yEJyiw7dwpw&s=03>)

- **Instagram post:**

https://instagram.com/stories/irishhealthservice/2709012113991407375?utm_medium=share_sheet

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