

# Cervical screening webinar

NHS Cervical Screening Programme

Link to session recording: [Cervical Screening Update  
Session 09/07/2025](#)

East of England Screening and Immunisation Team



# Session outline

Background

Pam Hall

Extended screening intervals

Hayley McCarthy

Cervical screening invitations and reminders

Samar Pankanti

Text message reminders

Samar Pankanti

SBRI project with Appt Health

Pam Hall

Self-sampling

Tom Davis

Cervical screening drop in sessions

Melanie Vincent

Questions

Please put your questions in the chat. We will collate any questions that we don't cover today and send responses when we send out the slides.

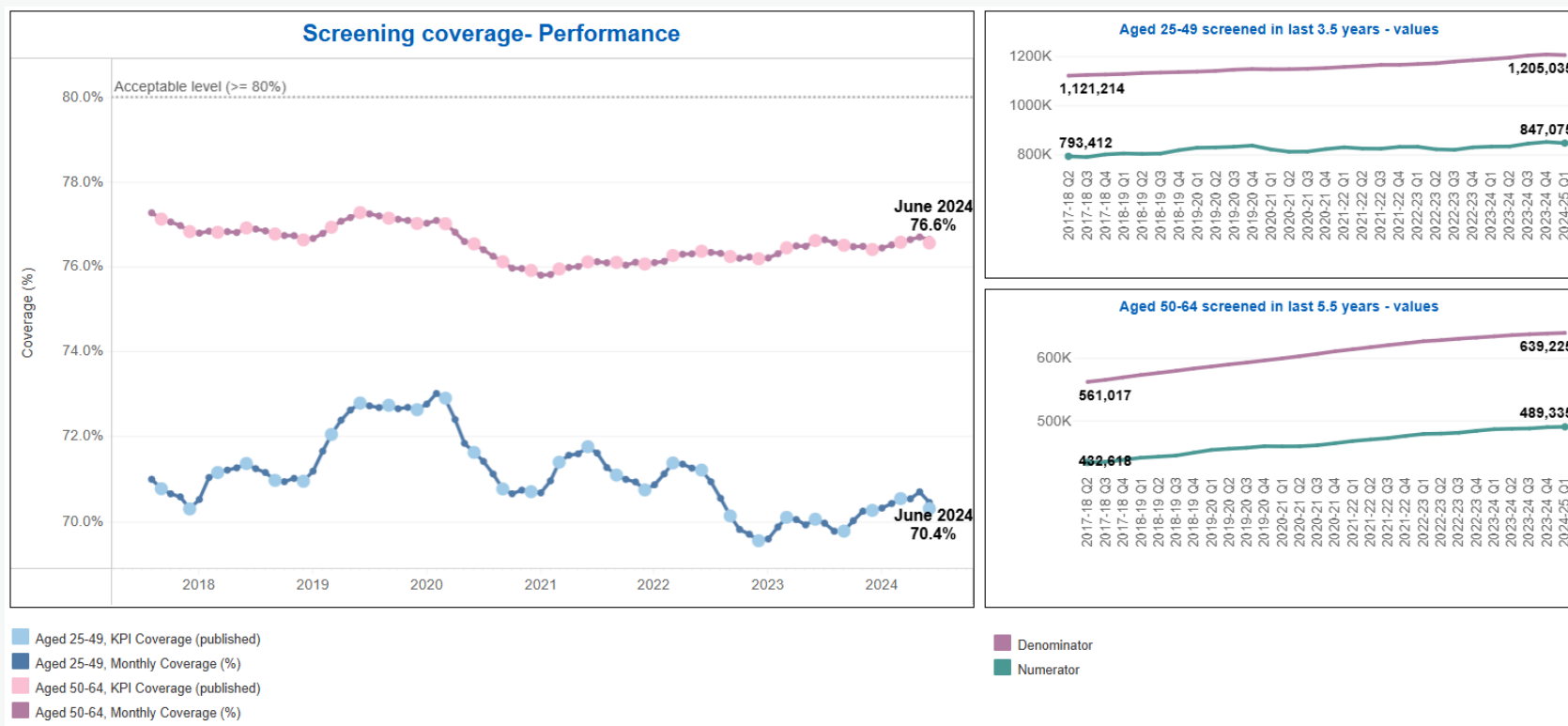
We can't answer any individual clinical queries.

This isn't a formal update session so there will not be a certificate of attendance.

# Background



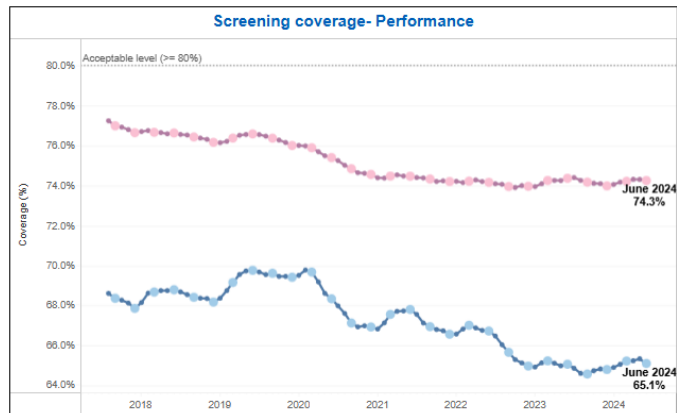
# Cervical screening coverage – East of England



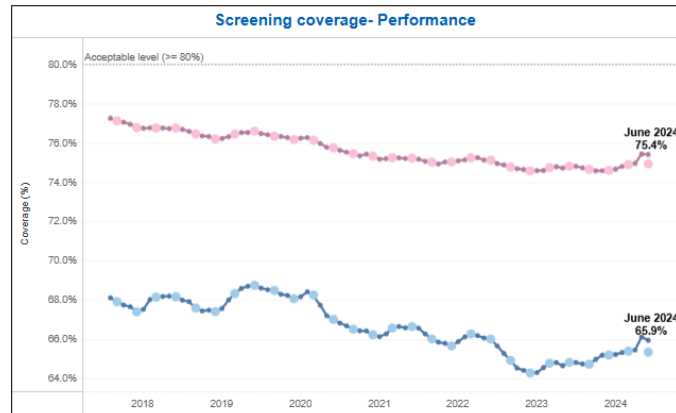
The national coverage standard is that 80% of the eligible population should have been screened within the previous 3.5 years (25 – 49) or 5.5 years (50 – 64).

# Cervical screening coverage – by ICB

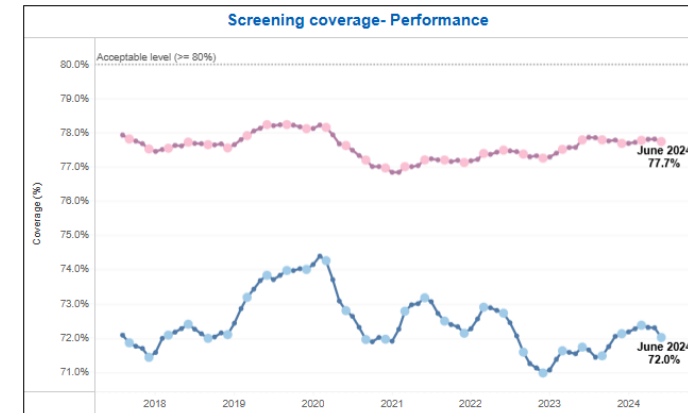
BLMK ICB



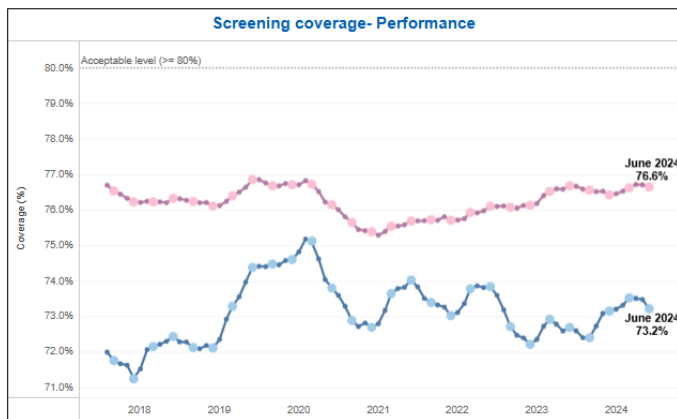
Cambs and Peterborough ICB



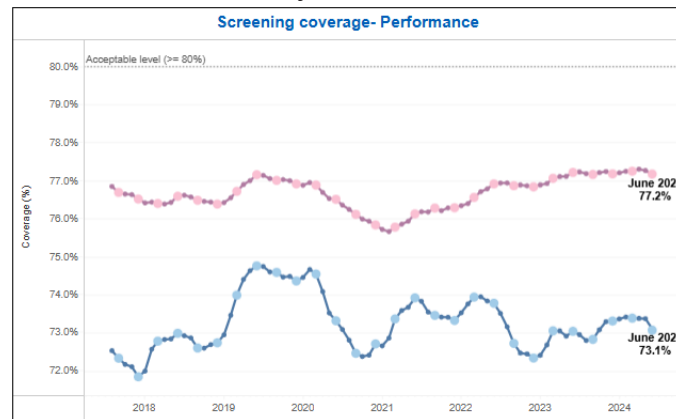
Herts and West Essex ICB



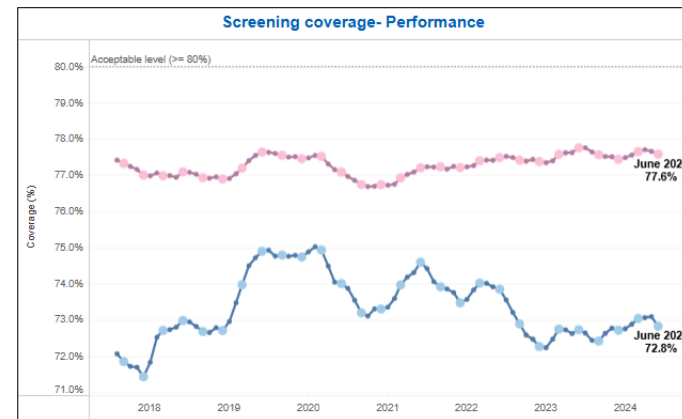
Mid and South Essex ICB



Norfolk and Waveney ICB

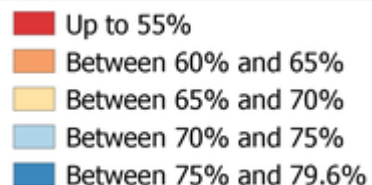
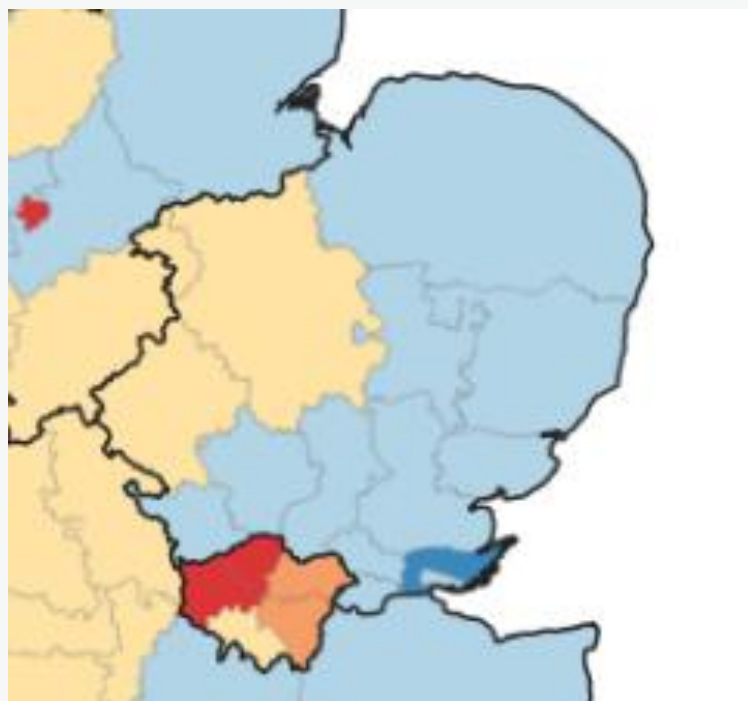


Suffolk and North East Essex ICB

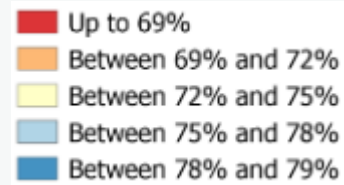
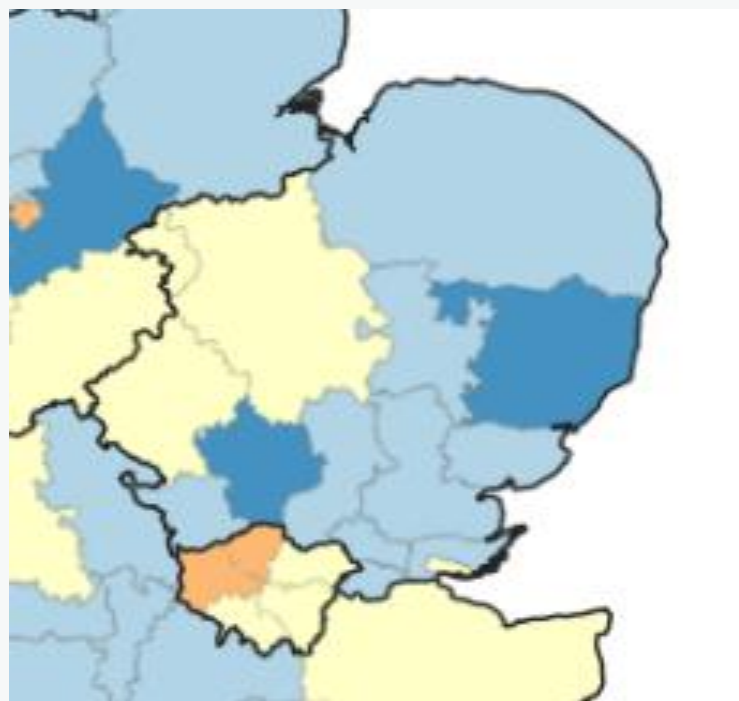


# Cervical screening coverage – East of England map


Coverage, 25 – 49 years, March 2024



Coverage, 50 – 64 years, March 2024



# Extended screening intervals



From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025, the routine cervical screening interval for women and people with a cervix aged 25 – 49 years who test negative for HPV changed from 3-yearly to 5-yearly.

Before 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2025	After 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2025
25 – 49 years old – every 3 years	25 – 49 years old – every 5 years
50- 64 years old – every 5 years	50- 64 years old – every 5 years

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extended-screening-interval-clinical-pathway-protocol/extended-screening-interval-clinical-pathway-protocol>

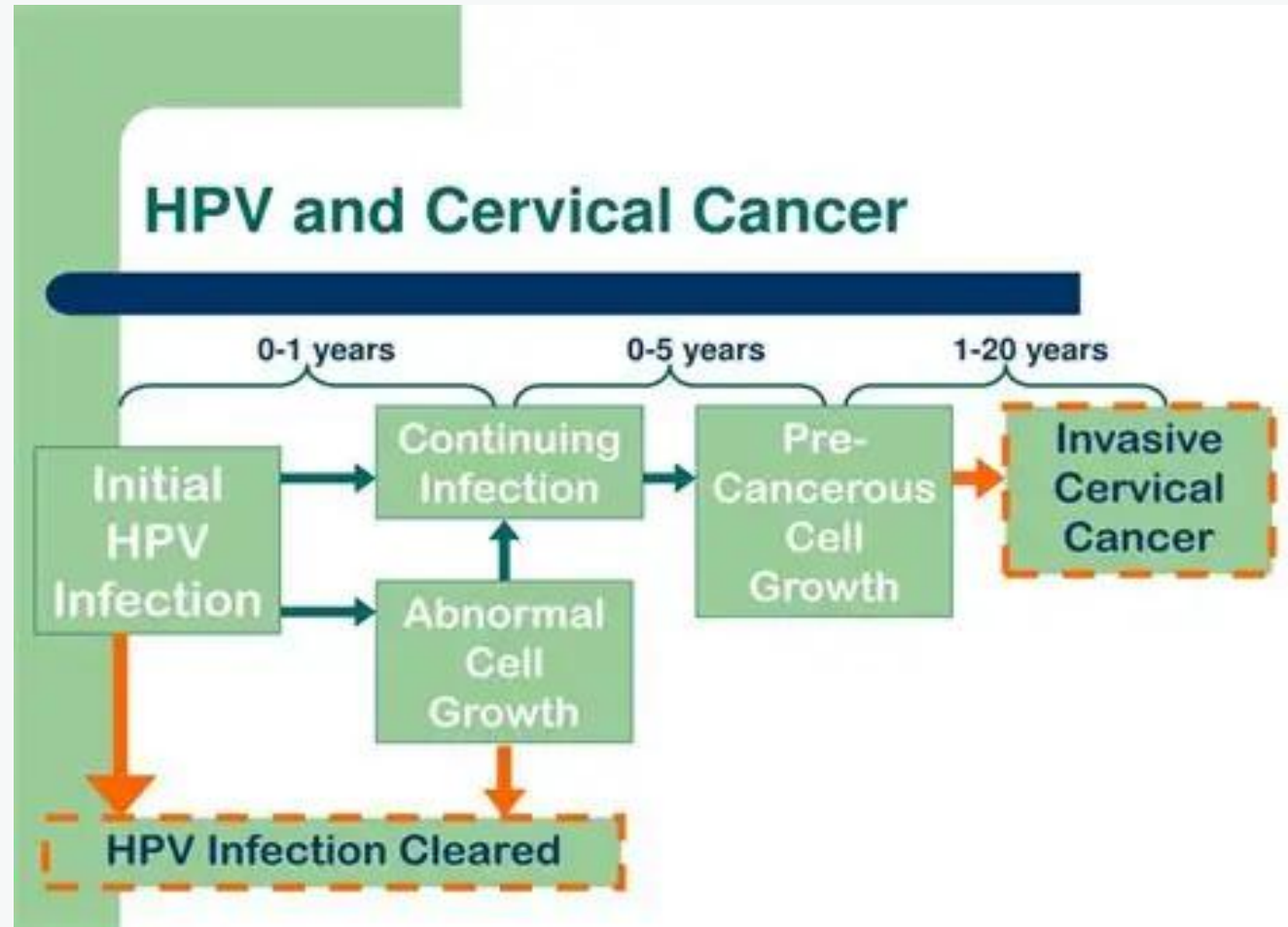


# Background 1 - Rationale

- HPV primary screening has been fully implemented in England since December 2019. This is a more sensitive and accurate test than the previous 'smear' test, which only looked for cervical cell changes.
- HPV testing is the best way to find out at an early stage who is at higher risk of developing the cervical cell changes that over time could potentially lead to cervical cancer if left untreated.
- This enables us to offer a more personalised approach to cervical cancer prevention based on an individual's risk.

# Background 2 – Why it is safe

- Studies have shown that if a person tests negative for high-risk human papillomavirus (hrHPV), they are extremely unlikely to go on to develop cervical cancer within the next 10 years. A study in England, published by King's College London, showed that 5-year screening intervals are as safe as 3-year intervals; the same number of cancers will be prevented, and less frequent cervical screening tests are needed.





## Background 3 - how the change was agreed

- The UK National Screening Committee (UKNSC) reviewed robust scientific evidence and recommended a change to a 5-year screening interval for participants aged 25-49 years who test negative for hrHPV at their routine screen. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has accepted this recommendation.
- Screening intervals will not be changed retrospectively. Participants aged 25 – 49 years who test negative on a routine primary HPV test collected on or after 1st July 2025 will move to a 5-yearly interval.
- This move brings England into line with Scotland and Wales who have introduced this change, and with women aged 50 – 64 who are already invited every 5 years.



# What is changing?

**For cervical screening participants aged 25 – 49 years who have a routine screening sample taken on or after 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025:**

- Patients who test negative for HPV will be recalled in 5 years.
- Patients who test negative for HPV but had a positive HPV result within the last 5 years that has not already been followed by a negative test will be recalled for screening in 3 years. This is because those with recent evidence of an HPV positive result have a higher chance of this happening again and so will not move to a 5-year interval straight away.



# What is not changing?

- Cervical screening pathway for patients who test positive for hrHPV.
- Cervical screening pathway for patients aged 50 – 64 years. Patients will continue to be invited every 5 years.
- HIV positive individuals will continue to be screened every year.
- Cervical screening pathway for patients aged 25 – 49 years and who have **never** had an HPV test. Patients will continue to be invited every 3 years.
- Cervical screening pathway for patients aged 25 - 49 years whose last screening test was part of an approved self-sampling evaluation and tested negative for HPV will remain on a 3-year recall interval until routine intervals in relation to self-sampling as part of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme are agreed.

# FAQs - Extended intervals 1



## **Why are cervical screening intervals changing?**

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) causes nearly all cervical cancers. We now use a test which is more sensitive and accurate than the previous method (smear test) to look for HPV in your sample. This helps us offer a more personalised approach by finding out who is at higher risk of developing the cervical cell changes that over time, if left untreated, could lead to cervical cancer. This change from 3 to 5 yearly screening is backed by robust scientific evidence – studies have shown that if you test negative for HPV you are extremely unlikely to go on to develop cervical cancer within the next 10 years. So now we have this better test, you don't need to be screened as often if you don't have HPV.

## **Will everyone move onto this new 5 yearly screening pathway automatically?**

No. Next test due dates will not be changed retrospectively; you will be invited at the interval in which you were advised of at the time of your last test. Only those who attend cervical screening on or after 1 July, and meet the clinical criteria, will have their next test due date set at 5 years. NHS England made this decision based on clinical advice from experts. Those aged 50 to 64 are already invited every 5 years.

# FAQs - Extended intervals 2



**So, will everyone aged 25-49 move to a 5-year screening if they test negative after 1 July?**

No, not everyone. If your test result is negative but your last test (taken within the last 5 years) showed an HPV positive result, you will still be invited for screening in 3 years time so that we can continue to monitor your HPV status. If you test negative for HPV at that next test, then you'll move to 5-year screening.

**What happens if I test positive for HPV?**

It's important to remember that having HPV does not mean that you have or will develop cervical cancer. It is a common virus that most people will have at some point in their life without knowing, which usually goes away on its own. If HPV is found in your sample and there are no cell changes, you are invited for screening again in 1 year. If cell changes are found alongside HPV, you are referred directly to a hospital clinic for a colposcopy to check the cervix more closely. Further follow up and treatment will depend on the colposcopy findings.

**I'm currently having treatment following a colposcopy, will I be put on 5- yearly screening?**

Not immediately. You will be followed up according to the reason for your treatment. Once this is completed successfully you will move to 5 yearly screening.

# FAQs - Extended intervals 3

## **I've had cervical cancer in the past, will I be put on 5-yearly screening**

Most people diagnosed with cervical cancer receive follow-up care and monitoring by their hospital cancer team instead of returning to regular screening. Those people who are diagnosed with very early cervical cancer and remain in the Cervical Screening Programme will go onto 5-year routine recall once their 10 year follow up is successfully completed.

## **I've never been for cervical screening, even though I am eligible. Will I now move onto a 5-year recall if I do decide to come for a test?**

Yes, if you come for screening and test negative for HPV you will be invited again in 5 years time.

## **I'm 25 and have been invited for my first ever screening. Will I automatically go straight onto a 5-year recall if I test negative?**

Yes, if you test negative for HPV at your first ever test aged 25, your next test date will be in 5 years time.

# **Cervical screening invitations and reminders**



# Digital invitations and reminders


- Digital invitations and reminder communications now being issued via the NHS App
- If a digital invitation / reminder is not possible, a letter will be posted
- Please encourage everyone to download the NHS App and enable notifications: [www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/)

# Invitations and reminders in the Cervical Screening Programme in the East of England

	National (via CSAS)	NECS / iPlato intervention	SBRI project with Appt Health
6 weeks before test due	Invitation via NHS App* or letter		
2.5 weeks after first invitation		Reminder text message	
18 weeks after first invitation if not tested	Reminder via NHS App* or letter		
14 weeks after national reminder if not tested	Patient flagged as non-responder and GP practice notified		Engagement with non-responders in practices signed up to the project

\*Invitations and reminder communications are now being sent via the NHS App. Patients who do not use the NHS App will receive a posted letter.

# **Text message reminders**

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- NHS East of England commissioned NECS CSU and iPlato to deliver a text message reminder to women invited for screening from 2021
  - Text reminders are sent to eligible people two and half weeks after their first invite letter



## Regional cervical screening SMS text reminder service findings - Feb 2024

- Participants who received an SMS as well as an invitation letter are 2.57 times more likely to attend screening than those who are only sent a letter. This equates to over **245,000** extra screenings completed since 12/07/2021 in EoE.
- The largest predictor of whether a participant will attend is previous screening history.
- Participants whose previous screen was within the last 3.5 / 5.5 years (depending on age) are much more likely to attend, whether or not they receive an SMS.
- Deprivation has a clear effect on whether a participant attends screening, with those in the least deprived areas more likely to attend than those in more deprived areas.
- The likelihood that a participant will attend screening increases with age.



## CSMS and text message reminders

- In June 2024 a new Cervical Screening Management System (CSMS) replaced the old cervical screening call/recall system, NHAIS, which was accessed via Open Exeter
- NECS and other partners had to upgrade their own platforms to be compatible with the new CSMS national system
- As a result, there was a pause in regional text reminders
- The text reminders are now back on and live from June 2025
- EoE is also piloting direct booking from text messages in a small number of practices



# **SBRI project with Appt Health**





# Project outline

- Appt Health working with 7 Cancer Alliances. Aiming to engage with ~40,000 patients per Cancer Alliance.
- Team has sought RIDAC approval

## Phase 1

- Appt Health intervention will take over after national programme ends, and a patient has been identified as a non-responder.
- Interventions designed to target 4 low-uptake patient sub-groups.
- Patients will receive an accessible text message with 3 response options for invitation – link, phone-based or letter-based.
- Information about slots available at practice or local practice hub.

## Phase 2


- Using data to identify patients unlikely to engage.
- Then patient participation intervention to work with patient groups to understand barriers to accessing cervical screening.

## Next steps

- Webinars for GP practices to learn more about the projects.
- Onboarding begins mid-July

# Self-sampling





The UK National Screening Committee has recommended HPV self-sampling for under-screened groups (people who have never attended or rarely attend for screening).



# What is changing?

**Starting in 2026, patients in under-screened groups will be offered cervical self-sampling.**

- Patients who have never attended for cervical screening or who rarely attend will be able to request a kit and receive it in the post.
- The self-sampling kits will test for HPV only, and patients who test positive will need to have a sample collected by a clinician, for cytology.
- It is not yet known whether self-sampling is as good as sampling by a clinician for patients who regularly attend for screening.

# Q&As – Self-sampling 1



1. **When will HPV self-sampling kits be available?** NHS England will roll out HPV self-sampling from early 2026.
2. **Who can access the HPV self-sampling kits?** HPV self-sampling will only be offered to those who rarely attend or who have never attended cervical screening. We will set out specific eligibility criteria in due course as the offer is developed.
3. **Why is it restricted to this group only?** This is because there is uncertainty about whether self-sampling is as good as clinician taken sampling for those who already regularly attend screening. For those who do not attend their appointments, any test is better than no test.
4. **Is HPV self-sampling as good as a clinician taken cervical screening?** A clinician-led test is the best option and has been shown to routinely detect HPV and prevent cancer. For those already attending routine cervical screening, a shift to self sampling might result in a programme that is not yet proven to be of equal efficacy. Further studies to consider whether self-sampling could be used across the whole population are being organised.
5. **How does the HPV self-sampling kit work?** A sample of cells will be self-collected from the vagina, which is a different method to a clinician-taken sample from the cervix. The self-sampling method tests for the presence of HPV only. People who test positive for HPV will still need to go for a clinician taken sample to get cytology (an examination of the cells of their cervix).

# Q&As – Self-sampling 2



**6. How will HPV self-sampling be offered to under-screened individuals?** Those eligible will initially be contacted via the NHS App. They will be able to request an HPV self-sampling kit and receive it through the post. If the person does not have the NHS App, the invitation will be sent using another form of communication, to ensure no one is excluded. We encourage people to download the NHS App and ensure notifications are switched on. As part of the future roll out, we are also exploring offering kits in other ways including:

- an opportunistic offer from a healthcare professional – where eligible individuals are offered a self-sampling kit when they attend a primary care setting
- a direct mail-out – where eligible individuals are sent a kit directly to their home
- a combination of both approaches

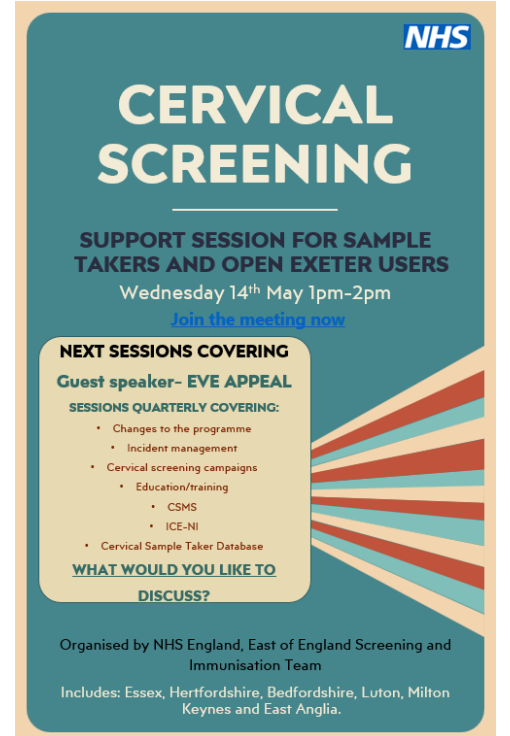
The Cervical Screening Programme is currently in the design phase of this initiative and it's subject to change. Further details about the new HPV self-sampling offer will be made available in due course.

[20250624 HPV self-sampling QA Final.pdf](#)

# Cervical screening drop-in sessions

**Next session:**  
**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September – 1 – 2pm**

Quarterly sessions for everyone involved in the Cervical Screening Programme



**NHS**

## CERVICAL SCREENING

**SUPPORT SESSION FOR SAMPLE TAKERS AND OPEN EXETER USERS**  
Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 1pm-2pm  
[Join the meeting now](#)

**NEXT SESSIONS COVERING**  
**Guest speaker- EVE APPEAL**  
**SESSIONS QUARTERLY COVERING:**

- Changes to the programme
- Incident management
- Cervical screening campaigns
- Education/training
  - CSMS
  - ICE-NI
- Cervical Sample Taker Database

**WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DISCUSS?**

Organised by NHS England, East of England Screening and Immunisation Team

Includes: Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and East Anglia.



# Questions and discussion

# Questions from the session

Question	Response
For digital invites will there still be a link for invitations in different languages. Or will it be sent in the patient's registered language?	Yes, there is a link to the translations. There are around 30 languages now.
Patients do not check their NHS App for messages - there is no alert to say check NHS App - we trialled it recently for triage and patients missed appointment times we had sent.	There is a national move to 'digital first' therefore patients will be invited via the NHS app initially, however if they do not pick this up, they will then be sent a letter in the post.
Can the kit be given opportunistically or only when due for screening.	We are waiting for full details about how kits will be made available. We know that they will initially be offered to patients who have never been screened or who have not been screened for a long time. Housebound patients who fall into this group will be invited, but the communications to patients should make it clear that the pathway for people who test positive is to have a sample taken by a clinician. We will ask the National team whether the test kits will be suitable for patients with learning disabilities.
Please could you clarify how the non-responder recalls will work?	
Are self sampling kit suitable for learning disability patients - has this been considered/piloted. Could we request kits be sent to housebound patients?	
What if patients insist a 3-yearly screen?	Patients can only be screened when they are eligible. The lab will dispose of any "out of programme" samples i.e. samples collected from patients who are not due for screening.
Is the self-sample essentially a vaginal swab?	Yes, the self-sample is a vaginal swab which will be tested for HPV.
Will QOF change?	We have not yet been notified about any changes to QOF.

# Contact details for Screening and Immunisation Team

Mid and South Essex ICB	<a href="mailto:england.essexatscreening@nhs.net">england.essexatscreening@nhs.net</a>
Suffolk and North East Essex ICB	
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB	<a href="mailto:england.ea-phsi@nhs.net">england.ea-phsi@nhs.net</a>
Norfolk and Waveney ICB	
Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes ICB	<a href="mailto:england.immsqa@nhs.net">england.immsqa@nhs.net</a>
Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB	

We have developed a series of [EoE Screening web pages](#) where you can access guidance / forms / contacts / latest news. Please check regularly for updates