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About this newsletter

We have created this newsletter to keep you informed with the latest news and information regarding sample taker training, sample taker register, recruitment, incident reporting and advice on becoming a mentor or assessor.

If you have any questions or wish to provide feedback, please contact the Screening and Immunisations Team using: england.swscreeningandimms@nhs.net

Please circulate to all members of staff who might find this newsletter useful.

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Screening into the new year

Please note that cervical screening is still continuing through this period and into the new year. Please continue to screen patients. We will inform you if this changes.

Sample Rejection and Early Recall

All cervical samples must satisfy the minimum requirements for processing. Laboratories may reject a sample for any of the following reasons;

- **One or more of the key patient identifiers is absent** (the laboratory cannot confirm the person's identity with full certainty)

There should be a minimum of 3 legible and correct patient demographics (ideally including the NHS number) to identify an individual and match them with any existing record on the pathology system.

- **There is major labelling discrepancy between the vial and the form**

The request form and vial must match each other. Provide the laboratory with all the appropriate information to enable the test to be processed and then reported. There should be a minimum of 3 legible and correct patient identifiers to link a form and vial that arrive at the laboratory together.

- **The patient is not due a cervical sample**

The sample taker must establish that a person is eligible for a test and that a test is now due.

- **The laboratory receives a sample in an out of date or inappropriate vial**

Check the vial to make sure it has not passed its expiry date. The vial must have at least 14 days remaining. The laboratory cannot carry out HPV testing on expired vials.

- **The sample taker does not have a valid PIN code**

Trainee sample takers should use the unique PIN assigned to them at the beginning of their training period that identifies them as a trainee.

If a sample has been rejected, sample takers are responsible for communicating events leading to rejection of a sample to the person concerned in an honest and sensitive manner. The sample taker should advise the person when they can take another sample.

For samples reported as unsatisfactory, please ensure that the appropriate 12 week gap procedure is followed. Do not take repeat samples within 3 months of a previous test. This allows sufficient time for the cervical epithelium to regenerate and avoids a false result.

Sample Taker Training

Cervical sample taking is one element of a complex screening pathway. A cervical screening test is a consultation and clinical examination. A cervical sample taker must have the required level of knowledge, understanding of the cervical screening programme and clinical skill.

The following UK registered healthcare professionals are eligible to train to undertake the role of cervical sample taker:

- registered nurses
- registered nursing associates* (see national guidance for more information)
- registered midwives
- physician associates who are registered on the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register (PAMVR)
- registered healthcare professionals working in integrated sexual health (ISH) clinics
- General Medical Council (GMC) registered medical doctors

To become a cervical sample taker, you must complete the full two-day training course with a local accredited training provider. This is the minimum standard and no cervical samples should be taken independently without completing this training.

What is involved in the training?

- 2 day full course
- Theoretical training course, which due to COVID measures will now be carried out online or within smaller groups in a classroom. It will cover the following topics;
 - Topic 1: the NHS Cervical Screening Programme
 - Topic 2: background to cervical screening
 - Topic 3: organisation of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme
 - Topic 4: equality of access to cervical screening
 - Topic 5: cervical screening sample requests
 - Topic 6: understanding the test results
 - Topic 7: anatomy and physiology of the pelvic organs
 - Topic 8: practical aspects of taking cervical samples
- Practical training of at least 3 hours is required with your local training provider, adhering to social distancing measures.
- The theoretical and follow on training needs to be completed within 9 months from the date you enrol.

Additional actions required before undertaking training

- Staff will need to contact their local training provider, to ensure that there are places available for you to undertake the training (If you are unsure of who your local training provider is for cervical sample taker training please contact your CCG, LMC or Screening and Immunisation Team)
- A suitable cervical sample taker mentor* will need to be identified (an experienced cervical sample taker) to support the trainee throughout their training.
 - Please ensure mentors and trainees are from the same practice.
 - Mentors must be onsite while trainees are taking any samples including any unsupervised practice at the end of the training period
- Trainee sample takers, mentors and employers need to be aware of the time commitment for the training (do not underestimate the amount of work and involvement needed to support the trainee)
- A learning plan is agreed with the trainee, their mentor and employer before the trainee attends the theory course.

*Mentors must be practising sample takers with at least 12 months continuous experience, having taken at least 50 cervical samples following completion of their own initial training. Mentors must have effective communication skills and ideally hold a relevant teaching qualification.

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Required update training for cervical sample takers (for those already qualified)

Sample takers must undertake a minimum of 3 hours update training every 3 years. The [national eLearning resource for sample takers](#) meets the programme requirements for update training.

Where face to face update training takes place, it must equate to a minimum of 3 hours of learning and fulfil the requirements of this guidance in addition to any local training requests. Training providers should link to their local screening and immunisation teams for the purposes of local update training.

Further information regarding cervical sample training can be found [here](#)

Open Exeter HRM101 form

All screening samples must be submitted to the laboratory together with a pre-populated HMR101 cervical cytology request form which has been completed legibly and in full. Please use the editable A4 portrait PDF version of the HMR101 form when submitting to the NBT lab. The HRM101 form, available from Open Exeter should always be pre-printed with **the correct demographic details and screening history of the individual patient**. It is essential that all pre-printed information is checked with the individual at their screening appointment in case there are any errors or updates.

Please take care when labelling samples, ensuring all samples have correct patient details.

Failure to use Open Exeter forms may result in either delays due to the laboratory checking the full history on Open Exeter or the risk of issuing an inappropriate management recommendation by the laboratory.

Sample taker professional responsibilities – Failsafe activities

All healthcare professionals have a duty to work within their professional boundaries. For cervical screening, this ensures that people receive a quality service provided by competent individuals.

Sample takers are responsible for:

- ensuring that they get a result from the lab for all samples they complete
- making sure the person is informed of their test result
- making sure the test result is followed up
- communicating with the individual if their sample is rejected and advising when another sample should be taken (and reflecting on this)
- making sure referrals take place for individuals who require further investigation and treatment
- co-operating with failsafe enquiries in a timely manner
- making sure adverse events and incidents are recorded, discussed and investigated.

Please use the [failsafe overview](#) to ensure all samples have gone through the correct procedure and to check all the failsafe processes.

Further information on sample taker responsibilities can be found [here](#).

Team Contact details

For routine NHS cervical screening enquiries, Screening and Immunisation incidents, and information about Screening Programmes and advice, contact the PHE South West Screening & Immunisations Team
england.swscreeningandimms@nhs.net

Reporting a Screening Incident

Many of you will have seen and used this before but just a reminder and link for easy access.

Screening incident guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-safety-incidents-in-nhs-screening-programmes>

Here's to the new year!

On behalf of the NHSE/I Screening and Immunisations Team, we wish you a very happy and healthy new year. 2020 has been an unprecedented year for everyone and we hope 2021 will be a much better time for all of us.

Thank you for everything you have done for the Cervical Screening Programme in the past year. We appreciate all your hard work and effort in continuing with the delivery of the programme.