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Northern Ireland Cervical Screening Laboratory

THE SMEAR

Northern Ireland Cervical Screening Laboratory (NICSL) Newsletter

Purpose

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide useful information and regular updates to service users in relation to the Cervical Screening service provided by the Northern Ireland Cervical Screening Laboratory.

Aim

The aim is to work together to provide an excellent and safe Cervical Screening Service in Northern Ireland.

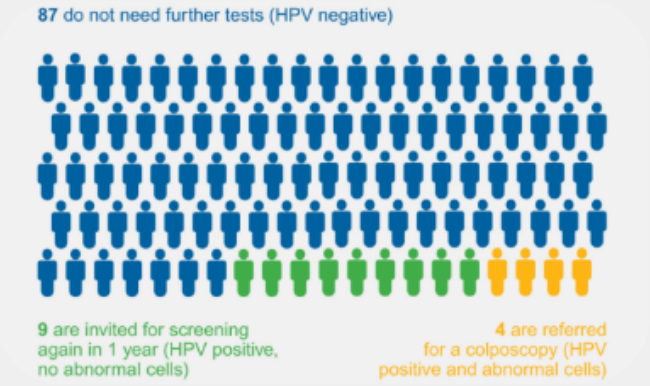
Key Updates

The Cervical Screening laboratory service in Northern Ireland has moved from 4 Trusts to one Regional service based in the Cytology Laboratory in Belfast, BHSCT, RGH since 1st November 2024.

In line with NHS Cervical Screening Programme (NHSCSP) guidelines, there is initially a Primary HPV Testing Service with triage Cytology, if a sample tests HPV Positive.

Do you know the current breakdown of Cervical Screening Results?

Results for every 100 people who have cervical screening



Source: NHS England: Guidance to Cervical Screening, Updated November 2025

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Role of the Cytology Laboratory in the Cervical Screening Programme

Responsibility = Call/Recall System
Patient receives a letter from the screening office inviting to attend their GP Practice for a smear

INVITATION STEP 01



SMEAR CLINIC STEP 02

Responsibility = Smear Taker
Patient attends for a smear to be taken. Smear Taker collects the sample in a vial

Responsibility = Laboratory
Samples arrives in Lab and is tested for HPV. Negative HPV results are released authorised and realesed to GP.

HPV TESTING STEP 03





CYTOLOGY SCREENING STEP 04

Responsibility = Laboratory
HPV positive samples have a cytology slide prepared . Highly skilled staff examine each cell on the slide assessing for abnormalities

Responsibility = GP/Smear Taker
Once authorised results are electronically sent to the GP who contacts the patient. Patients with positive cytology will be referred to Colposcopy .

RESULTS STEP 05





COLPOSCOPY STEP 06

Responsibility = Colposcopy
If patient requires further examination or treatment, their direct referrals are sent by Colposcopy Units to attend the local Trust Colposcopy team

Cervical Screening

Role of the Cervical Cytology Failsafe Team

Direct Referral to Colposcopy

Report sent to respective Colposcopy by failsafe team

Colposcopy triage and arrange an appointment for patient

Patient DNA'd appointment - Failsafe send 1st letter to GP (6 months after smear taken) with questionnaire to ascertain why didn't attend appointment

No Response from GP to Failsafe 1st letter after 3 months

Response to letter from GP stating patient attended **privately of own accord**

EOR (end of responsibility) letter issued to state laboratory failsafe ceased. Patient care will revert to GP as primary physician

Response to letter from GP states **travelling (with a proposed return date if applicable)** Patient deferred until this date

Response to letter from GP states **pregnant.** Patient deferred until 3 months post-partum

Response to letter from GP states patient **did not respond to contact made by GP** - await further 3 months to give time for patient to get in touch

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR SAMPLE SUBMISSION

Use the Regional Cervical Screening Request form
Other request forms do not have required information and will be rejected following a grace period.



Use dedicated cervical cytology pink transport bags
Ensure the sample details on LBC vial match the request form



COMMON REJECTION REASONS

1) **OUT OF DATE VIALS** – please check expiry dates on LBC vials – MUST have at least 6 weeks prior to expiry date

2) **MISLABELLED/UNLABELLED SAMPLES** –Please double check details on Request form and Vial. Addressograph labels are preferred where possible. Minimum acceptance criteria of 3 identifiers are required

3) **INCOMPLETE REQUEST FORM DETAILS** – Please complete ALL sections of request form correctly, before sending to the laboratory

4) **NO HCN NUMBER** – A valid HCN is required at time of processing, if patient has recently moved ensure registration is complete with BSO before taking/sending smear

5) **EARLY REPEATS** – Wait 3 months from the last smear the patient had before submitting a new sample. Any earlier than this will be rejected.

Please ensure:

- ✓ Vial and request form match
- ✓ All patient identifiers are present
- ✓ Forms are fully completed and legible
- ✓ Correct cervical cytology pink transport bags is used

Must wait **3 months** to repeat a sample even though it was not processed in the labaratory

Cervical Screening

Useful Contact Details

Regional Cervical Cytology Laboratory	
Email Address	**Contact Number**
CxCytoLabFailsafe@belfasttrust.hscni.net	02895 047 851
Screenlink Healthcare (Smear Taker Suppliers)	
Website	**Contact Number**
Order Supplies - Screenlink Healthcare	00353 1460 5270
Cervical Screening Office (Call/Recall)	
Email Address	**Contact Number**
Screening.bso@hscni.net	02895 363 792

Useful Reference Websites

- Cellular Pathology User Manual:

Belfast Trust Laboratories User Manual | Belfast Health & Social Care Trust website

- PHE Guidance for Health Professionals on NI Cervical Screening Programme:

Cancer Screening Northern Ireland

- Guidance on the Cervical Screening Care Pathways:

Cervical Screening Care Pathway - GOV.UK

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