



Hertfordshire and  
West Essex Integrated  
Care System

# Cervical Screening Tool Kit

## Herts and West Essex ICB

July 2023

If you have any queries or comments about this toolkit please get in touch @ [kathryn.cremins@nhs.net](mailto:kathryn.cremins@nhs.net)

**Working together**  
for a healthier future



# CREDITS AND PARTNERSHIP

## About this toolkit

This toolkit has been created for GP practices in Hertfordshire and West Essex, to support efforts to increase the uptake of cervical screening.

It has been adapted from a tool kit created by representatives from the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board and was created in association with the NHS England Screening and Immunisation Team and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System.

We may refer to work carried out by other stakeholders and will credit these organisations accordingly.

We want this toolkit to be practical and useful, so please feel free to use the content in your own work.



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# 1. Why do we need a Cervical Screening Toolkit?

## **Introduction/purpose**

*Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer. It can prevent the development of cervical cancer and saves around 5000 lives in the UK every year.*

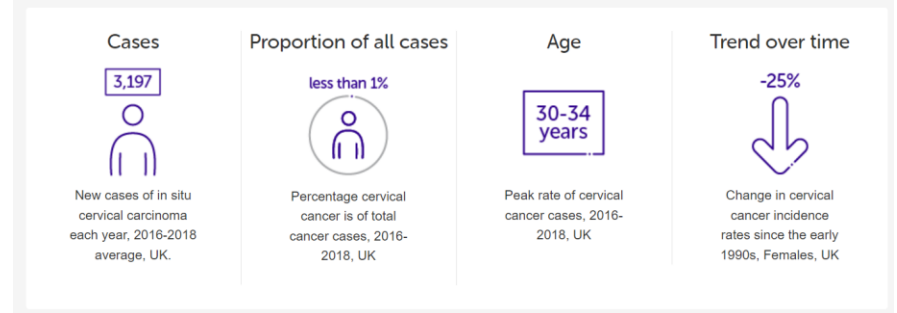
Participating in the Cervical Screening Programme is a personal choice. If the patient decides to opt out, it should be after a clinical conversation and with the appropriate consent form signed and recorded. The patient should have an awareness of the implications of withdrawing from the programme and be aware that they can re-join at any time.

A recent population health management project by N&W ICB suggested that there are some patients who may be included in the programme despite expressing a wish to withdraw and/or are being invited although they are no longer eligible. If this is the case, practices and PCNs need to know and should update the patient record and inform the Cervical Screening administrative service (CSAS) – <https://www.csas.nhs.uk/support/>

Non-participation does not necessarily mean that the patient is *choosing* not to attend or that they are not concerned about their health. Patients may also be disadvantaged by the current process for accessing screening, so the toolkit includes some top tips regarding the reasonable adjustments that practices and PCNs can take to improve the accessibility and equity of access to their screening services.

***The aim of this toolkit is to gather this information into one place to support practices and PCNs to optimise the cervical screening processes, increase coverage and improve awareness of signposting to the national and regional guidance in one user-friendly place.***

Cervical cancer incidence statistics



## 2. About the National Cervical Screening Programme

NHS

NHS cervical screening

Helping you decide



Public Health England (PHE) created this leaflet on behalf of the NHS

- Cervical screening is not a test for cancer, it's a test to help to prevent cancer.
- Cervical screening checks a sample of cells from the cervix for certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). These types of HPV can cause abnormal changes to the cells in your cervix and are called "high risk" types of HPV.
- If these types of HPV are found during screening (an HPV positive result), the sample of cells is then checked for abnormal changes. If abnormal changes are not treated, they may turn into cervical cancer. Finding high risk HPV early means that it can be monitored for these abnormal cell changes. Abnormal changes can be treated so they do not get a chance to turn into cervical cancer.
- Even if someone has had the HPV vaccination, they still need a screen as not all high-risk HPV types are eradicated.
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/further-help-and-support/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-description-in-brief/cervical-screening-helping-you-decide--2>

### Support for everyone

For more information and support about going for cervical screening, results and treatment, contact Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust by:

Joining the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust forum <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/forum>

Calling the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust helpline on 0808 802 8000

Using the Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust ask the expert service <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/get-support/ask-expert>

### 3. Cervical screening risk stratification criteria to identify those at highest risk

#### **Top Tips:**

- Review your data to identify those at highest risk using the criteria in this toolkit (NHS Pathways has an algorithm for this, but you can create your own search)
- Regularly (weekly) review your cervical screening data against Prior notification List (PNL) to make sure all patients are eligible for screening e.g., are not pregnant, over the age etc
- If they you haven't used Open Exeter to identify eligible patients, check Open Exeter to ensure women identified by the search are due for screening before sending them a reminder
- Agree your plan to proactively contact these patients using the resources in this toolkit.

#### **Identify the patient group eligible for Cervical Screening:**

- Denominator: Population Size within age range
- Denominator: Population Size within age range and eligible
- Numerator: Number receiving screening intervention
- Numerator: Number receiving screening intervention by age group (25-49, 50-64)

(please note that Open Exeter is the national call/recall programme, that holds accurate and correct information on patients' status and recall dates)

This will identify :

- Women who have never had a screen (29-49, 50-64)
- Women aged 29-49 : No screen in 3.5 years
- Women aged 50-64 : No screen in 5.5 years

*This is the patient cohort we need to contact*

You can further risk stratify/prioritise this patient cohort by:

- Deprivation (e.g. those eligible residents who live in the most deprived areas of your locality/PCN/practice).
- Those who have not attended with a previous abnormal screen / colposcopy / no follow up
- Smokers (as this can increase the level of risk)

**NB if a patient has had a TOTAL hysterectomy (No Cervix) then they will need to be ceased from the programme. If they have had a SUB-TOTAL hysterectomy then the patients need to still be part of the cervical screening programme. People who are affected by learning difficulties and or serious mental health issues will also need to follow an alternative pathway with additional clinical support. You may also wish to review your exemption lists.**

## 4. Cervical screening invitation letter and text notification

### Example letter:

Dear,

You are receiving this letter because you are overdue for cervical screening (sometimes called a 'smear test').

Cervical screening is a way of finding changes in the cervix which, if left untreated, could develop into cancer. Cervical screening saves 5,000 lives each year in the UK. The test takes 5 minutes and is a great way to reduce the risk of cervical cancer. For these reasons, we encourage you to consider booking an appointment to come in for the test. Whether or not to take part in cervical screening is your choice, so you should read the information we have included with this letter to help you decide. If you have access to the internet, further information about the test can be found here <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/cervical-screening/what-is-cervical-screening> and <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening> You can also contact the practice nurse who can talk to you about the test.

Yours sincerely

Please ensure that **all** PCN/Practice staff know that these communications are being sent out and that the rationale is shared beforehand.

Allow time for the patient to respond (suggest 2 weeks).



## 5. Cervical screening fact sheet (to be sent with letter)

### **What is cervical screening?**

- Cervical screening is a free screening test available on the NHS as part of the national cervical screening programme. Screening is a way of identifying apparently healthy people who may have an increased risk of a particular condition. The NHS offers a range of screening tests to different sections of the population. Cervical screening (a smear test) checks 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 help prevent cancer.
- It is your choice whether to go for cervical screening. We hope this information helps you make the best decision for you and your health. Cervical Screening is one of the best ways to protect you from cervical cancer.
- If you have symptoms, it is important that you contact your GP surgery for an examination. The national Cervical Screening programme is not intended for people who have symptoms.

### **Who is invited for cervical screening?**

- All women and people with a cervix between the ages of 25 and 64 should go for regular cervical screening. You'll get a letter in the post inviting you to make an appointment.
- Under 25s – are invited up to 6 months before you turn 25
- 25 to 49 year old – every 3 years
- 50 to 64 year old – every 5 years
- 65 or older – only if 1 of your last 3 tests was abnormal
- Women 65 or older can request a cervical screen if they have never been screened or have not had screening since they were aged 50

You can book your appointment as soon as you have received your invitation. If you are unsure when your last cervical screening test was, then please contact your GP practice.



# Cervical screening fact sheet (continued)

## What is HPV?

- HPV is the name for a very common group of viruses.
- Most people will get some type of HPV during their lives. It is very common and nothing to feel ashamed or embarrassed about.
- You can get HPV from any kind of skin-to-skin contact of the genital area, not just from penetrative sex.
- Some types of HPV (called “high risk” types) can cause cervical cancer. In most cases your body will get rid of HPV without it causing any problems. But sometimes HPV can stay in your body for a long time.
- If high risk types of HPV stay in your body, they can cause changes to the cells in your cervix. These changes may become cervical cancer if not treated.
- If you do not have a high-risk type of HPV it is very unlikely you will get cervical cancer, even if you have had abnormal cell changes in your cervix before.

## How cervical screening helps prevent cancer

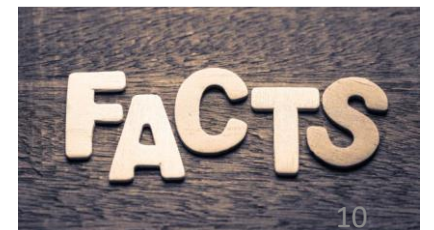
- Cervical screening checks a sample of cells from your cervix for certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV).
- These types of HPV can cause abnormal changes to the cells in your cervix and are called “high risk” types of HPV.
- If these types of HPV are found during screening (an HPV positive result), the sample of cells that were taken when having your cervical screening test, is then checked for abnormal changes. If abnormal cells are not treated, they may turn into cervical cancer.



## Cervical screening fact sheet (continued)

### **Opting out of cervical screening**

- If you decide to not take part in the cervical screening programme, we suggest you discuss this further with your GP or practice nurse who can discuss both the benefits and risks of cervical screening.
- If then, you decide you do not want to be part of the cervical screening programme you can make an informed choice to opt out. Contact your GP or practice nurse to discuss further.
- For further information on cervical screening, please visit the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/>



# Cervical screening Text: Invite to attend

Example wording for texts:

*Dear (xx)*

*We have noticed that you are overdue for cervical screening and would like to invite you to call the Surgery to book an appointment with one of our Nurses. (Practice telephone number).*

*Many thanks*

*(SURGERY NAME)*

*Dear (xx)*

*we are contacting you to remind you that your cervical screening test (smear test) is overdue. Please phone the surgery if you'd like to make an appointment or to discuss any questions or concerns you have about the test.*

*Many thanks*

*(SURGERY NAME)*



## 6. How to set up direct, on-line booking using AccuRx (EMIS)



Check the QOF CS005 & CS006 indicators to find the patients in both age groups who are due / overdue their smear test

Check the number of available appointments in the book

Produce an Accurx compatible list for all patients who have a valid mobile number and create a batch to load into Accurx

Upload to Accurx and specify the appointment slot that these patients can select – “Smear only”. (It won’t allow them to book any other kind of slot).

Send the invites out and check the uptake



## 6. How to set up direct on-line booking using AccuRx (SystemOne)

Check the QOF CS005 & CS006 indicators to find the patients in both age groups who are due / overdue their smear test. Produce a report on SystemOne and save in a CSV file.

Check the number of available appointments, make sure that there is a specific slot type set up which are only bookable with the nurses that do smears (not every clinician will be able to carry out screening)

Produce an Accurx compatible list for all patients who have a valid mobile number and create a batch to load into Accurx

Upload to Accurx and specify the appointment slot that these patients can select – “Smear only”. (It won't allow them to book any other kind of slot).

Send the invites out and check the uptake

## 7. Cervical screening patient call script

### Improving Cervical Screening Coverage : Support for High Risk Patients

This is a suggested guide for Staff and Volunteers who are liaising with patients who are overdue their cervical cancer screen (or smear test) and have been identified as being at higher risk of having undetected cervical abnormalities / disease. It can be used in conjunction with the Fact Sheet.



Engaging with these patients to promote higher rates of screening coverage will reduce clinical risks and help our system partners to improve access to Cancer Screening Programmes.

The script follows the questions that are asked in the online questionnaire with suggested prompts and reminders.

This is **not** an attempt to coerce someone to attend or pass judgement on their right not to come forwards.

If the patient does not want to engage in the Screening Programme it is reasonable to ask if they could tell you why. This will help your PCN/Practice and our ICB to understand barriers to access, demonstrates a clear grip on reasons for non-response and keeps data up to date. You may consider that an exemption is an option.

Please adjust the script as appropriate.

The ICB Cancer Team are happy to facilitate access to training that can increase confidence in having these conversations.

# Cervical screening patient call script (continued)

## Before you dial:

Check the name of the GP Surgery the patient is registered with.

## If call not answered:

Leave a message as follows:

“Hello, I’m (your name) I work for the NHS and am calling on behalf of your (insert name of surgery) GP Practice to talk to you about a letter you have received regarding our GP Services. You won’t be able to call this number back but either I or a team member will again soon. Thank you”.

## If call is answered:

Introduce yourself (begin the conversation):

- Hello, my name is (x) and I am calling on behalf of (x) GP Practice.
- May I speak to (patient’s full name). For data protection purposes can you confirm that your date of birth is?

***If you need to speak to someone else in the house on behalf of the patient, you must ensure that you have permission from the patient to do so. They should be able to confirm date of birth as well. If they can’t, we can always call them back later when they’ve found out that information.***





# Cervical screening patient call script (continued)

## Response

- a) *Not now* – Someone will try calling another time. Thank the patient for their time.
- b) *Not at all* – Please record in notes. Thank the patient for their time.
- c) Yes – Continue with script.
- Thank you, just to assure you that any information you give me today will be treated as confidential and recorded within a secure NHS system, which can only be accessed by authorised clinical staff. Nothing will be shared with anyone else without your consent.
- I am calling about improving access to cervical screening programmes. We sent a letter to you recently about this.
- I just have a few questions to run through.



## Question 1

- *Are you aware that you are overdue a cervical screen?*

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer. If the patient is not sure, please leave as 'not set'. If the answer is clearly 'yes', then please ask if they would like further information on cervical screening and continue with the questions, which should not take long, as it is helpful to reaffirm the importance of cervical screening.

Disclaimer: if you feel that you have been contacted in error, we apologise for any inconvenience caused. This is because there are some data fields which due to data protection we are unable to view. Please advise us and we will remove you from our records.

# Cervical screening patient call script (continued)

## **Question 2**

- Would you like to book a cervical screening with your GP Practice?

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer. If the patient is not sure, please leave as 'not set'. If the patient is unsure, then follow to the next questions.

## **Question 3**

- Are you able to get to your Surgery?

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Please record the reasons why in the notes box.

Home sampling kits are not currently offered as part of the National Screening Programme. This is no standard operating procedure for home visits – the Practice would review this on a case-by-case basis.

## **Question 4**

- Do you have any questions regarding your cervical screening or anything that is worrying you?

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Please tell the patient if you are not clinically trained.

Note concerns and refer to the Fact Sheet to provide reassurance and/or flag to Practice as appropriate.



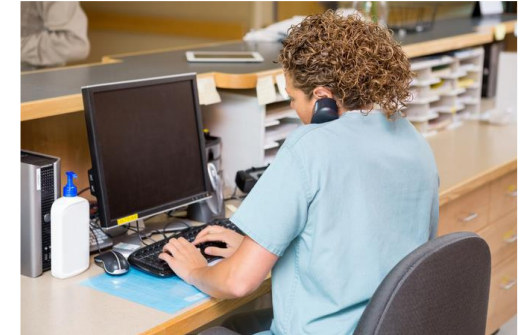
# Cervical screening patient call script (continued)

## **Question 5**

- Have you had a bad experience relating to a cervical screening in the past?

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

**Please note: some people confuse a cervical screen with a Colposcopy (which is a further examination to take a closer look at the cervix and is more invasive. Colposcopies are carried out in hospital, not Primary Care.**



**If they have more detailed questions, please advise them to contact their Practice directly and make a note to record this. You can also ask the Practice to contact them.**

## **Question 6**

- Have you had a human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine?

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer. If the patient is not sure, please leave as 'not set'.

- The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is designed to protect against four high risk types of HPV, HPV 6, 1, 16 and 18. Between them, types 16 and 18 are the cause of most cervical cancers in the UK (more than 70%).

The HPV vaccine helps protect against cancers caused by HPV, however, it is still very important that patients who are eligible attend their cervical screening, even if they have had the HPV vaccination.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/hpv-human-papillomavirus-vaccine/#:~:text=From%20the%202019%20to%202020,and%20anal%20and%20genital%20cancers>

# Cervical screening patient call script (continued)

## **Question 7 (not relevant if you access to the GP booking system)**

- **Your Practice will contact you to book an appointment. How would you prefer to be contacted?**

Take preferred email address and or telephone number.

- Are you happy to be rung/text?

Please record preference or both.

## **Question 8 (not relevant if you have access to the appointment booking system)**

- **Is there a good day / time for you to be booked in for your cervical screening?**

The Practice will advise re: what appointments can be offered and where.

## **Question 9 (not relevant if you access to the appointment booking system)**

- **Would you prefer Saturday morning clinics?**

This should be a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Thank the Patient for their time



## 8. Making reasonable adjustment for patients with additional needs

The law says public services should put 'reasonable adjustments' in place to help people use the services.

This means they need to change their services, so they are easier to use. Every eligible patient should be able to access cervical screening should they wish to.

It can prevent the development of cervical cancer and saves around 5000 lives in the UK every year.

Going to a test can be difficult for many reasons, and with cervical screening uptake in decline we should be working to overcome barriers not introducing them.

This link will take you to full and comprehensive guidance for equality of access to cervical screening.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cervical-screening-cervical-sample-taker-training/4-equality-of-access-to-cervical-screening>



## 8.1 Top Tips for making reasonable adjustment

*Appointment times and days –is screening offered outside of core working hours or at the weekend? Are there quieter times?*

*Location of Services –are services easily accessible (e.g., on a bus route, within walking distance or where people routinely go)?*

*Reassurance/clinical advice –does the patient need further information or support to attend?*

*Is a double appointment needed? –some patients may need extra time.*

*Advocacy/chaperone –can the patient bring a carer, translator, or friend to their appointment?*

*Method of invitation –is the invitation in the correct language? Can the patient read? Would they prefer a text?*

*Facilities –is the clinical set up accessible to all? Does the patient require specialist equipment?*

*Pre-screen orientation –would the patient benefit from a look around the clinic space and the equipment to be used?*



**TIP**  
TOP TIPS

## 8.1 Top Tips for making reasonable adjustment (continue)

*Previous bad experience/sexual trauma –may need reassurance and specialist support*

*Workforce/Training –does the Practice have enough sample takers? Is training up to date?*

*Underserved populations –engagement with communities, temporary registration, winning trust*

*Review of non-responders and exemptions –review regularly to ensure that information is correct and up to date*

*Transgender patients (with a cervix) –may need a direct invitation from the Practice and specialist support*

*Opportunistic screening –are there any open access clinics?*

*Housebound patients –how does the Practice support these patients?*





## 8.2 Learning Disability Decision Making Tool and Resources

The **Cervical Screening Pathway** and the **Cervical Screening Decision Process Tool** [CSDP tool] have been developed by the Hertfordshire Learning Disability Nursing Team to be used as part of the Learning Disability Annual Health Check. It is hoped that by following the pathway and using the decision process tool, practice staff will ensure that:

1. Mental capacity guidance is followed
2. Appropriate communication tools under accessible Information standard [2016] are utilised
3. Steps are taken to reduce future risk of delays in diagnosis.

[Cervical Screening Decision Pathway](#)

[Cervical Screening Decision Process Tool](#)

## 9. Where to find your data

National guidance will often direct you to Public Health England's Fingertips data: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/> This gives an overview of screening and diagnostics but is generalised and often subject to time lags.

You can find more up to date information on cervical screening here : [Cervical Screening Programme - Coverage Statistics \[Management Information\] - NDRS \(digital.nhs.uk\)](#)

You can also access practice data with your own QOF live data reporting via your clinical systems (EMIS, SystmOne etc) but please note that your QOF figures include any exception coded cases, whereas published NHS England figures (on other datasets) use total coverage and do not adjust for exception codes.

If you access to NHS Pathways you can view screening data and the associated risk stratification pathways. Lists generated need to be checked to ensure that patients are eligible for screening.

Data provided by the national or regional screening teams may be subject to limitations (e.g., not for wide distribution).



# 10. Guidance and Resources for Cervical Screening

## **General Information**

[Cervical good practice guide feb 2022.pdf \(cancerresearchuk.org\)](#)

[Cervical screening: ideas for improving access and uptake -GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## **Resources for primary care**

**Text messaging:** [NHS population screening: effective text message use](#)

**Supporting underserved groups:** [review of interventions to improve participation among underserved groups](#)

**Supporting people with learning disability:** [supporting people with a learning disability](#)

**Supporting people with severe mental illness:** [access for people with severe mental illness](#)

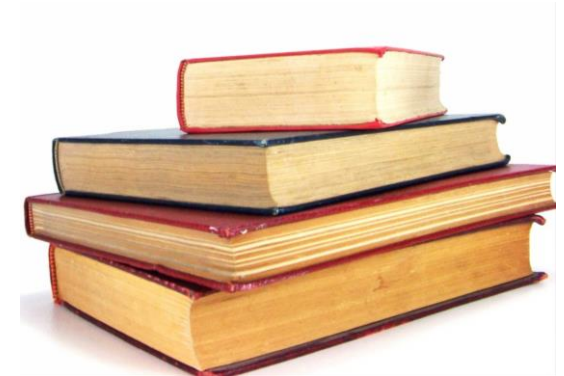
**Making reasonable adjustments:** [making reasonable adjustments](#)

**Guide to completing prior notification lists:** [19198 PCSE PNL Guide v4.indd \(csas.nhs.uk\)](#)

**CSAS website and support page:** [Primary Care Support - CSAS](#)

**Call/recall best practice guidelines:** [Cervical screening: call and recall administration best practice GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

**Education and Training:** [Cervical screening: education and training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



# Guidance and Resources for Cervical Screening (continue)

## **Resources for Primary Care (continue)**

Resources representative of people from different cultures [Cervical Screening campaign | Campaign Resource Centre \(phe.gov.uk\)](#)  
[London Social Assets \[ZIP\] | Campaign Resource Centre \(phe.gov.uk\)](#)

The Easy read version is : [Easy Read Poster \[ZIP\] | Campaign Resource Centre \(phe.gov.uk\)](#)  
LGBTIQ : [My Cervix My Service - Live Through This](#)

## **Resources for patients**

[Picture guides to screening](#)

[Cervical screening: support for people who find it hard to attend](#)

[Cervical screening: and read easy guide](#)

[Cervical screening: translated 'helping you decide' leaflet](#)

[Male and female specific screening animations with subtitle translations](#)

<https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cervical-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening/about>

