

## Update on the catch up plan for cervical screening

Cervical screening entails a pathway, from national call/recall system, sample taking in GP practices, laboratory processing of samples and referral to colposcopy as required and the update below covers all elements of the pathway\.

### Invitations

- Cervical call and recall system is operated nationally with no local/regional variation possible. From 9/4/20 to 6/6/20 invitation letters and reminder letters for most women due cervical screening were held back in response to pressures on the system in general and GP practices in particular. Letters for women with a history of abnormalities on short term recall continued to be sent
- Invitation letters started to be reissued from 6th June 2020, with the backlog fed in every two weeks i.e. double the normal quantity of letters were sent out on alternate weeks, meaning that all women who should have received an invitation letter between April and June did so by end September. Invitation letters have now returned to their normal parameters i.e women are being invited on their normal due date.

### Demand

- Demand on GP practices depends on when women respond to their invitations. Once invited, women can choose when to attend. A second invitation letter is sent nationally if women do not respond to the first, and GP practices send a third invitation if women still have not attended. National modelling of appointment demand (based on pre-COVID behaviour of 50% attendance within 6 months, with 40% of women attending doing so within 6 weeks of first invitation, 20% within 6 weeks of reminder and remaining 40% attending evenly over the remaining 14 weeks) suggests that practices would be taking 125% of normal number of samples from October to December. Total demand is predicted to return slowly to normal by May 2021.
- Demand on lab and colposcopy depends on both women's behaviour/response times and GP practice appointment availability. Based on the above modelling, demand on the lab would mirror that on GP practices, with colposcopy demand following 2 – 6 weeks later.

### Sample Taking

- During the first wave, GP practices were asked to continue screening but were given the option of prioritising women on short-term recall and/or with high levels of anxiety, should the need arise
- Since the restarting of invitations in early June, practices have been actively encouraged to ensure that women who request an appointment to have a cervical sample taken are given one promptly
- Weekly practice-level sample taking data, based on the samples received and processed by the laboratory, shows that the % of practices from which the lab has received samples has increased week on week. In the early stages of recovery, any practice where sample taking seemed low by comparison with

expected levels of activity was contacted to remind them of the need to screen. Now, all practices in Oxfordshire are consistently sending samples and there is a clear upward trend in numbers of samples taken, indicating good progress on recovery across the board.

### **Laboratory**

- Number of samples being processed continuing to increase and is now above normal activity levels (+11% w.e. 23/10/20). Note this figure is for the whole lab, which serves all of the SE and parts of the SW regions
- Lab capacity for processing HPV tests remains at 100% - no loss of capacity for COVID testing, though a national shortage of reagents on the part of the supplier of HPV testing reagents that serves the regional lab affected the lab's ability to test samples for 10 days in late September/early October – this was due to a sudden surge in demand internationally for HPV testing as cervical screening programmes were restored, coupled with increased demand for COVID testing which uses the same raw materials
- The sample booking process has also been affected by COVID (staff self-isolation, sickness etc) which has led to a backlog in specimen reception which, in turn, has affected turnaround times. The lab has had a recovery plan in place and the backlog will have been cleared by end October

### **Colposcopy**

- Colposcopy units continued to offer appointments to all high risk women during March to June, with most deferring low risk women for up to 3 months, in line with national guidance. The backlog of low risk women in Oxfordshire has now been cleared
- Oxfordshire colposcopy service is consistently meeting waiting time targets for both low and high risk women
- Did not attend (DNA) rates remain high at 8 – 10%. We continue to work with colposcopy teams to ensure actions are taking to address this eg phoning women before appointments and following up DNA's to check reasons for non attendance and to re-book.