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|  <b>GIG<br/>CYMRU<br/>NHS<br/>WALES</b> | Iechyd Cyhoeddus<br>Cymru<br>Public Health<br>Wales | <b>Name of Meeting</b><br>Board<br><b>Date of Meeting</b><br>26 May 2022<br><b>Agenda item:</b><br>PHW 4.2 |
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## Cervical Screening Wales Extended Screening Update

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| <b>Executive lead:</b>          | Meng Khaw- National Director, Health Protection and Screening Services. Executive Medical Director   |
| <b>Author:</b>                  | Sharon Hillier, Director Screening Division, Public Health Wales<br>Heather Lewis, Consultant in Public Health                                 |
| <b>Approval/Scrutiny route:</b> | Meng Khaw- National Director, Health Protection and Screening Services / Executive Medical Director<br>Business Executive Team – 20 April 2022 |

### Purpose

This report provides an update on the change made to the Cervical Screening Wales Programme in January 2022 to be in line with current UK National Screening Committee recommendations for participants aged 25 to 49 years who have a HPV negative result. This results an extension of the screening interval, which had a strong negative reaction from the public when communicated.

### Recommendation:

|  |                                      |                                       |                                   |  |
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| APPROVE<br><input type="checkbox"/>  | CONSIDER<br><input type="checkbox"/> | RECOMMEND<br><input type="checkbox"/> | ADOPT<br><input type="checkbox"/> | ASSURANCE<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| The <b>Board</b> is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Receive</b> the update and be <b>assured</b> that work is being taken forward to review, learn lessons and to implement a communication strategy to reassure the public about the change.</li> </ul> |                                      |                                       |                                   |  |

**Link to Public Health Wales [Strategic Plan](#)**

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities.

This report contributes to the following:

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| <b>Strategic Priority</b> | 6 - Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention |
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**Summary impact analysis**

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| <b>Equality and Health Impact Assessment</b> | An Equality and Health Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of this implementation project which resulted in decision that non responders remained current screening interval until they took up screening offer to ensure reminded to take up offer. |
| <b>Risk and Assurance</b>                    | Risk were outlined by the project   |
| <b>Health and Care Standards</b>             | Theme 3 - Effective Care  |
| <b>Financial implications</b>                | The funding for the communication plan post go live of the change has been identified   |
| <b>People implications</b>                   | The change is evidenced based and in line with current UK NSC recommendations. Work is required to reassure participants about this change.   |

## 1. Purpose

This report provides an update on the change made to the Cervical Screening Wales Programme in January 2022 to be in line with current UK National Screening Committee recommendations for participants aged 25 to 49 years who have a HPV negative result. This results in a change in routine recall interval which had a strong negative reaction from public when communicated.

## 2. Background

Infection with high-risk Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is responsible for 99.8% of cervical cancers. In recognition of this, in November 2015, the UK National Screening Committee (UKNSC) recommended the use of primary HPV screening within the cervical screening programme as it is a better, more sensitive test than primary cytology which was use previously.

Following approval from Wales Screening Committee, Public Health Wales fully implemented the HPV primary testing into the Cervical Screening Wales programme in September 2018. Wales was the first UK nation to introduce this change.

In January 2019, the UKNSC hosted a three month public consultation exercise on changes to the cervical screening programme which closed in January 2019. At their meeting in February 2019, the UKNSC considered the results of the consultation and recommended the following cervical screening programme modifications.

- The extension of the screening interval from three to five years for women and people with a cervix aged 25-49 who test negative for HPV as part of their routine screening test.
- The implementation of two surveillance tests at 12 month intervals for women who remain HPV positive and cytology negative.

Documents relating to the UK National Screening Committee recommendation can be accessed [here](#).

The UK National Screening Committee's recommendation was discussed at the Wales Screening Committee in July 2020 with the recommendation accepted to establish a workstream to plan the implementation of the extension of the routine screening interval. This brought Wales in line with Scotland who implemented this change in March 2020.

- This change will only affect those aged 25 – 49 if HPV is not found in their **next routine** cervical screening sample.
- It will **not affect** those who are on treatment or early repeat pathways where their last test showed the presence of HPV.
- If HPV is found in the sample then these individuals will be followed up more closely, by either being referred directly to a hospital Colposcopy clinic if cell changes are present; or by being invited for a further test in a year's time if no cell changes are present in their sample.
- Women who do not attend for their next screening appointment will be sent reminders and invited again in 3 years.

### 3. Implementation and reaction in Wales

The workstream was established within the Cervical Screening Wales programme to take forward this change as requested. Stakeholders were sent communication at the end of December 2021 about this change and a proactive press release (agreed with WG comms) was shared with the media for release on 4 January 2022. Social media posts were also shared on 4 January 2022.

As a result of the announcement, there was considerable negative feedback on the social media posts.

On 5 January 2022, in response to a large volume of negative responses on social media, Public Health Wales acknowledged that the change could have been better communicated and shared FAQs and a film of Dr Sharon Hillier, Director of Screening Services, explaining the changes. Jo's Trust and Cancer Research UK also spoke on social media in support of the implementation of the interval change. A ministerial statement from Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services, in support of the change was shared. Clinical expert leads have spoken on media in support of the change in order to reassure the public.

A change.org petition was set up on 4 January 2022 to request a reversal of the decision which had over one million signatures. A Senedd petition was also established and had sufficient signatures to require a discussion in the Senedd. The debate in the Senedd was held on 19 January and upheld the change and the main message was that steps were needed to develop an awareness campaign to review the communication approach and rebuild trust with women and people with a cervix.

#### 4. Work undertaken following implementation

An After Action Review (AAR) was facilitated by Sally Attwood on 18 February 2022 to identify learning with key members of staff involved. The discussion was constructive and open, and key learning was identified.

Several recommendations were made and these will inform a more detailed discussion, using a maturity matrix model approach to agree key gaps and actions to take forward to inform similar situations in the future.

In the interim, the following actions are being implemented in line with the discussion at the review:

- A creative agency has been commissioned to work with programme and communication leads to undertake a trust-building campaign to ensure the correct messaging about human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical screening are being communicated on social media to reassure women and people with a cervix. The creative agency have outlined a plan for the campaign and working with the programme and stakeholders to develop the messages. These will be tested with service users and then targeted at key identified audiences to improve understanding of HPV as the primary test used in cervical screening. The timing of the campaign will be set once messages have been tested and agreed and aimed to be June or July 2022. It is important that an appropriate approach is taken and that the campaign does not create a further negative reaction.
- Summary notes from Wales Screening Committee have been agreed to be available on WG website to improve transparency and enable public to be aware of policy changes.
- A meeting with UK colleagues to share our learning was undertaken on 12 April. This was a helpful discussion to share with other countries the key events and learning from our experience to inform learning at UK level and to inform plans for implementation of UKNSC recommendations for this change and potentially other screening programmes. Key learning identified was to ensure the capture of public response in UKNSC consultations especially around potentially controversial issues. Clarification has been sought that UKNSC can publicly communicate and support in such situations in the future.

#### 5. Recommendation

The **Board** is asked to:

- **Receive** the update and be **assured** that work is being taken forward to review, learn lessons and to implement a communication strategy to reassure the public about the change.

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