Introduction of HPV Primary Screening

What have we done so far?

The primary HR HPV screening pilot commenced 1st April 2017 with 73 GP Practices across Wales taking part. The aim of the pilot was to understand and resolve any issues arising from implementing HPV primary screening. The evaluation of the pilot has now been completed with information gathered from smear takers, service users and CSW trainers to help inform full rollout. The HR HPV test itself was not being piloted as it has been approved by the National Screening Committee and Welsh Government.

Where are we now?

The full evaluation report is in the process of being written up and will be published soon. As anticipated from the English sentinel sites HPV Primary will bring about a reduction in the need for cytology which will have an impact on Health Board cytology teams. Mitigation plans had been developed in case of a reduction in cytology screening capacity affecting the service. The mitigation plan has now been triggered and we are in the process of converting some non-pilot practices to HPV Primary Screening to commence May 2018.

What have we still got to do?

The next few months will be a very busy time with HPV Primary Screening training sessions being held across Wales to convert all smear takers to HPV Primary Screening by mid September 2018. Further details regarding training sessions can be found in this newsletter alternatively please visit:

UK National Screening Committee HPV Recommendation
January 2016

The UK NSC recommends that the NHS Cervical Screening Programme should adopt the test for Human Papillomavirus (HPV) as a primary screening test

High Risk HPV is found in 99.7% of cervical cancers. Over three quarters of sexually active women will acquire the infection at some time in their lives. It is most common in women under 35 years. Most infections are transient and are cleared by the woman’s immune system.

Currently, the cervical screening programme offered to women 25-64 uses cytology. It only tests for HPV in women who have been found to have a low grade abnormality or have had treatment for an abnormality.

Evidence suggest screening for HPV will be a more effective way to let women know whether they have any risk of developing cervical cancer. It will reduce the number of women who need to go on to have cytology screening to those who are HPV positive only.

Key findings to support HPV Primary Screening

• The HPV vaccination offered to girls 12 to 13 strengthens the rationale for primary HPV screening. The Vaccination will offer prevention of HPV and result in a falling number of women who remain at risk of catching HPV and developing cervical cancer*

• A primary test for HPV will save more lives by determining a woman’s risk earlier. Work to assess extending the screening interval with HPV screening is ongoing.

• HPV testing means that if the woman tested does not have high risk HPV her chances of developing a cancer within five years are very small

*HPV vaccine protects against HPV types 16 and 18, the two types that cause 70% of cervical cancer. It is important to attend for screening even if vaccinated so that the abnormalities caused by other HPV types may be detected

To find out more about the UK NSC’s HPV recommendation, please visit:

Legacy.screening.nhs.uk/cervical_cancer


**HPV Primary Training Sessions**

The aim of these sessions is to provide smear takers with information about HPV and HR HPV Primary Screening. This will enable smear takers to inform the women attending for screening of the changes to the programme and the link between HPV and cervical cancer.

All smear takers are invited to attend a training session. Alternatively a representative from each Practice or Service needs to attend and disseminate the information back to their smear taker colleagues.

Training dates and venues are available at the following link:


To book a training session please contact:

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<tr>
<td><strong>South East Wales</strong></td>
<td>Lynne Porter Regional Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cervical Screening Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Lynne.Porter2@wales.nhs.uk">Lynne.Porter2@wales.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel: 029 2078 7930 Fax: 029 2078 7891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Wales</strong></td>
<td>Diane Melia, CSAD Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cervical Screening Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preswylfa, Hendy Road, Mold CH7 1PZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Diane.Melia@wales.nhs.uk">Diane.Melia@wales.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tel: 01352 803528 Fax: 01352 751770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid &amp; West Wales</strong></td>
<td>Jacki Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cervical Screening Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matrix House, Swansea SA6 8DP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:Jacki.Thomas@wales.nhs.uk">Jacki.Thomas@wales.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tel: 01792 940928</td>
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Latest Statistics from HPV Primary Screening Implementation Pilot

- from April 2017 to February 2018 there have been 23,348 HPV tests performed on authorised samples
- 87.9% have been HPV negative (HPVN) and 11.6% HPV positive (HPVP)
- 99.3% of HPVN samples have been reported within 2 weeks

Thank You!

Cervical Screening Wales would like to thank all smear takers and staff who took the time to respond to our evaluation questionnaires and helped distribute them to women in clinics.

We had a fantastic response from women and smear takers.

Local Contacts – HPV Primary Pilot

**North Wales**
Linda Wood, Lead Nurse – Linda.wood@wales.nhs.uk - 01352 803520
Hayley Sillet, Nurse Coordinator – Hayley.sillett@wales.nhs.uk - 01352 803622

**South East**
Vivienne Breen – Lead Nurse – Vivienne.breen@wales.nhs.uk - 02920 787937
Keren Poulden – Nurse Coordinator – keren.poulden2@wales.nhs.uk - 02920 787942

**South West**
Bethan Morgan – Lead Nurse– Bethan.morgan3@wales.nhs.uk 01792 940919