PUBLIC HEALTH WALES OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION

PRIORITY: URGENT – PLEASE CASCADE TO ALL STAFF

Dear Colleague

Cervical Screening Wales has written to alert all Lead GP Partners of an incident that occurred within the sample taking element of the Cervical Screening Programme in Wales. You will be aware that the programme supplies practices/clinics with the consumables needed to take a cervical sample (smear) and send it to the processing laboratory, and that part of this kit includes a sample vial. These vials have a shelf life and the expiry date is written on the label.

The importance of checking the vial expiry date is stressed with sample takers when they receive their training from Cervical Screening Wales. However, during the latter part of 2018 we received a very high number of samples where the vial had passed its expiry date and therefore had to be rejected. As a consequence, around 300 women needed to be recalled for a repeat smear 12 weeks after their original test.

During the week commencing 10th September 2018, all practices/clinics were telephoned to alert them to the issue and were also sent a memo, however some continue to submit samples in expired vials. We need to ask that you ensure robust stock management procedures for the consumables provided by Cervical Screening Wales, to ensure that this does not happen again. Please note that Public Health Wales purchase and provide the vials so there is no cost implication to your practice/clinic to dispose of out of date vials. However we do request prudent stock control.

Please make your smear takers within the practice aware of the following points:
• Please note that the manufacturers display expiry dates as **year:month:day** on the vials.

• When placing the patient label on the vial please ensure this does not obscure the expiry date on the vial as the laboratory needs to check this on all samples

• Similarly, the laboratory LBC processor determines whether the fluid level in the vial is satisfactory. Fluid level should be within the opaque band. Could we take this opportunity to remind sample takers to ensure all specimens reach the lab with sufficient fluid in them

• If a sample is sent to the laboratory in an expired vial, the sample will be rejected and the women will have to be called for a repeat test 12 weeks after her last smear

Please note that we will also be sending out the attached form on a quarterly basis to smear takers to determine stock level and number of out of date vials. This form was issued in November 2018, if you have not completed and returned this form then please do so.

We are aware than some places hold a stock of vials with expiry dates in February and March 2019, so we would advise you are extra vigilant when checking date over the next few months. Please remember, as previously stated, the expiry is recorded a **year:month:day.** on the vials.