HPV triage is the next phase of HPV testing to be introduced in Wales, and will start at the end of May 2016. This is in addition to HPV Test of Cure (TOC) which is now being performed for all women on early recall following a high grade abnormality or treatment of any grade of CIN/CGIN.

All smear takers need to make sure that they know about HPV testing and inform all women attending for cervical smears that their sample may be tested.

What is HPV triage?
It is an additional test (looking for High Risk Human Papillomavirus—HR HPV) that is done if a woman’s smear test is reported as showing borderline or low grade abnormalities. The test is done on the same sample taken for the cervical smear.

What if the HPV test is negative?
It is possible to have minor changes without these being caused by HR HPV. If there is no HR HPV, a woman is not at increased risk of developing cervical cancer. So she can be managed as if her smear was negative and her next smear test would be in 3 or 5 years time, depending on her age.

If she is aged 60 or over, her recall for screening will be cancelled.

What if the HPV test is positive?
The woman will be referred to colposcopy, as she is at increased risk of having abnormal cells.

How will women know about HPV testing?
The possibility of a smear sample being tested for HR HPV is mentioned both in the invitation letter and in the leaflet.

Information will also be available for women on the CSW website at http://www.cervicalscreeningwales.wales.nhs.uk/

What do smear takers need to do?
The HR HPV test is an additional test performed on the same sample taken for the cervical smear, so smear takers should just take the sample and send to the laboratory as normal.

It is very important that you make sure that all women attending for a smear are aware that their sample may be tested, so that they are giving informed consent. You should also make sure that you understand about HR HPV and HR HPV testing, in case you are asked any questions.

Information about HR HPV and testing is available on the CSW Screening Professionals site at http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/screeningprofessionals/hpv

What effect will the testing have?
Many women are currently having early follow-up smears after a smear showing minor changes. A positive HR HPV test indentifies those women at higher risk of abnormalities, and these women will be referred straight to colposcopy.

A negative HR HPV test will mean that these women go back to ‘routine recall’, as they are at very low risk of having abnormalities, which will save them having unnecessary repeat tests and anxiety.

In the short term, there will be an increase in referrals to colposcopy clinics. However, if the examination is normal, the woman can be discharged to normal recall, reducing the need for early repeat tests.