



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghástála
National Screening Service

Operational Plan 2022

National Screening Service



Operational Plan

The National Screening Service (NSS) operational plan sets out our high-level aims for 2022. The plan incorporates ongoing multi-annual projects and initiatives from 2021, in addition to the strategic and operational objectives set for 2022.

Included in this operational plan is a brief summary of the NSS Operational Plan 2021 outcomes, as well as a description of each of the NSS programme/department core functions. The commitments made through the National Service Plan 2022 are outlined in Appendix 1.

NSS Purpose

The National Screening Service delivers four national population-based screening programmes, for bowel, breast, and cervical cancer, and for detecting sight-threatening retinopathy in people with diabetes. These programmes aim to reduce morbidity and mortality in the population through prevention and/or early detection of disease and treatment.

NSS Goals

In 2021, the NSS set out three goals as the central themes to guide service delivery and support decision-making throughout the year. These goals, set out below, remain relevant and central to delivery in 2022. We continue to recognise that our HSE trust and confidence drivers – public good, respect, integrity and competence – are critical to ensuring the continued uptake and engagement of participants, and to reassure the public of the high quality and standards of the National Screening Service. We recognise the benefits of having a wide involvement of stakeholders and, throughout 2021, work progressed in coordinating the implementation of the Patient and Public Partnership (PPP) strategy and developing a robust PPP function within the National Screening Service. Governance underpins trust in the NSS. We recognise that having the right systems in place are key to providing reassurance. One element of enhancing our governance within the NSS is being undertaken by our Quality, Safety and Risk Management (QSRM) department, which has progressed the integration of our quality management systems and provision of training modules for staff. This project is in its final stages and will enable the NSS to continue to monitor our risk register in line with the HSE Risk Management Framework.

Read more at [Understanding Trust and the HSE](#).

Trust

Proactive Communication

Openness & Transparency

Delivery against objectives



Involvement

Meaningful involvement of stakeholders

External input – support & challenge



Governance

Processes

Performance

Structures

Staff development, training, ownership



Programme/Department Lead Key

- BC BreastCheck
- CC CervicalCheck
- BS BowelScreen
- DRS Diabetic RetinaScreen
- PH Public Health
- CS Client Services
- HR Human Resources
- PEU Programme Evaluation Unit
- C Communications
- SBP Strategy, Business & Projects
- F Finance
- ICT Information and Communication Technologies
- QSRM Quality, Safety and Risk Management

Objectives to Achieve the Goals

Trust



Implementation of ERG Interval Cancer Report

Build on and complete the work commenced in 2021 to implement the recommendations arising from the Expert Reference Group Interval Cancer Reports.



Delivery of the 2022 National Service Plan

Delivery of the objectives outlined in 2022 National Service Plan for the National Screening Service (appendix 1).

Implementation of a new CervicalCheck Information Management System

Commence planning for the procurement and implementation of a new CervicalCheck Information Management System to upgrade the current system which will ensure continuity and streamlining of operations in the day-to-day delivery of cervical screening.



Implementation of a new BreastCheck Client & Radiology Information System

Implement and upgrade the Radiology Information System (RIS) in BreastCheck to ensure the uninterrupted operation and continuity of the RIS for the clinical, operation and administrative day-to-day delivery of the BreastCheck service.



Diabetic Retina Screen Digital Surveillance Pathway

Evaluate the feasibility to increase the number of patients suitable for the extended digital surveillance pathway. On approval, implement the pathway by redirecting eligible patients from hospital-based treatment clinics to a community-based setting.



Compliments, Complaints & Compliance

Roll out and embed the HSE Your Service Your Say (YSYS) processes across the NSS to ensure a standardised approach to managing complaints and service user feedback across the NSS.



National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL)

Continue to develop the National Cervical Screening Laboratory at the Coombe Women and Infant's University Hospital, including completion of construction, installation of key equipment and the recruitment of any outstanding personnel.



Objectives to Achieve the Goals

Involvement



National Screening Service Strategy Development

Support the rebuilding of trust in screening services and share our vision and purpose. Establish the strategic direction of the NSS for the next three to five years to ensure goals are aligned with the NSS purpose and objectives, working alongside SláinteCare, HSE, NSAC (National Screening Advisory Committee) and other agencies.



Enhancing Communications

Enhance and embed the Information Hub which is a collaborative function that will transform how the NSS and screening programmes communicate with all stakeholders, including the public, service users and healthcare professionals.



Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs)

To obtain real-time, patient-reported experience from BowelScreen service users to enhance our quality improvement strategy and our delivery of a patient-centred service.



Elimination of Cervical Cancer

Establish a collaborative group that will develop a strategy towards the elimination of cervical cancer.



Organisation Development

Support the development of individuals and teams to maximise potential, capacity, engagement and culture across the NSS.



Patient & Public Partnership (PPP) strategy

The NSS will publish a mid-way progress report on the implementation of the PPP strategy in 2022 and work will continue to embed the PPP within the NSS.



Communications Strategy

Implement a Communications Strategy, in conjunction with National Communications, to ensure continued support, education and information for the public on screening programmes. Improve trust and confidence among patients, staff and public in NSS service delivery.



Objectives to Achieve the Goals



Governance

Information Governance

Continue to develop and strengthen information governance within the NSS, ensure robust oversight for NSS and ensure compliance with legislation.



Incident Management Pathways

Enable a supportive safety culture by embedding the HSE Incident Management Framework (IMF) within the four screening programmes and the NSS.



Risk Management

Integrate enterprise risk management methodologies & HSE Integrated Risk Management Policy 2017 into culture and organisational system (people, processes, service).



Data Protection

Improve the awareness of and compliance with data protection responsibilities within the NSS. Strengthening these processes reduces the risk of data protection breach incidents and promotes service quality improvements.



Quality Management Systems (QMS)

Continue to enhance the use of appropriate quality systems across the NSS. This will improve the monitoring and management of risk and incidents across the organisation which will enable the development of shared learning. Enabling a supportive safety culture by ensuring a customised QMS is available and embedded to best support processes across the NSS.



Staff Recruitment & Retention

Develop a contingency plan to mitigate challenges to staffing levels to ensure continued delivery of our screening programmes by managing staff attrition and increasing staffing levels. Develop and deliver improved structures and career progression pathways to support staff to continually improve screening programme delivery.



NSS Client Management System (CMS)

Continue to enhance client services to ensure patients and families have access to their screening records for all screening programmes by delivering a dedicated Client Management System.



ICT Security Review

Review ICT infrastructures and processes against HSE and ISO security standards, to inform the basis for process improvements and enhancements to the cyber security stance of the NSS.



Summary of Operational Plan 2021

Included in the operational plan for 2021 were 79 projects/initiatives from across our four screening programmes and nine departments. Projects/initiatives included short, medium and multi-year developments. Service delivery was impacted in 2021 due to Covid-19 and the HSE cyber attack resulting in the screening programmes operating at a reduced capacity. The safety of our service users and of our staff is our highest priority and as such the NSS maintained the advised safety measures to reduce both the risk of infection due to Covid-19, and the impact of the HSE cyber attack. There were many challenges experienced by our screening programme and department teams during 2021 in managing the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the HSE cyber attack in May, whilst progressing and implementing projects and service improvements across the organisation. Of the 79 initiatives outlined in the Operational Plan 2021; 36 have been completed, with 37 continuing to progress and deliver against expected timelines. Unfortunately, due to the current environment and challenges experienced both within the NSS and due to restrictions on external stakeholders a small number of projects have been adversely impacted and have been deferred to start in 2022. These have been highlighted as a priority within the Operational Plan 2022.

The development of an NSS Strategy is one project which has been deferred due to competing demands arising from the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and is now due to commence in Quarter 1 2022. This strategy aims to establish our strategic direction for the next three to five years. Work progressed in 2021 to scope the proposed approach in advance of formally starting the strategy development in 2022.

Summary of NSS Core Operations

As outlined in the National Service Plan 2022, in addition to focusing on service delivery and returning to normal capacity levels (within the restrictions required under the Covid-19 public health advice), the NSS objectives for 2022 relate to the goals ‘trust’, ‘involvement’ and ‘governance’. Building on our 2021 goals and funding, the NSS aims to continue to provide excellence in screening underpinned by ambitious plans to enhance capacity and access, build trust and confidence through proactive communication and transparency, and reduce risk and future-proof the service through enabling technology.

BreastCheck

The primary goal of BreastCheck – the National Breast Screening Programme, is to reduce mortality from breast cancer by finding and treating the disease at the earliest possible stage. The primary objective of BreastCheck is to detect breast cancer as early as possible, as it is normally easier to treat and there are greater treatment options available. BreastCheck currently offers free mammograms to women aged 50 to 69 every two years.

The programme experienced significant impact from the changing Covid-19 environment and the HSE cyber attack throughout 2021. There remains a number of challenges facing the programme as a result of the ongoing impact of the pandemic and managing the delivery of a safe screening programme to ‘well’ women. In implementing public health guidance the programme temporarily paused screening for a second time in the first quarter of 2021 and the cumulative result was the programme lost approximately a year of screening time. A priority, therefore, for the programme for 2022 is to maximise uptake through targeted communication and use of the text messaging appointment system to reduce the number of delayed appointments safely and in line with infection control guidelines. Additionally, the programme will open two new mobile BreastCheck units to increase capacity and access.

CervicalCheck

The primary goal of CervicalCheck, the national cervical screening programme, is to reduce the number of women and people with a cervix in Ireland who may develop cervical cancer. The programme aims to achieve high-quality, best practice and person-centred care for women aged 25 to 65 years. Free HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) cervical screening tests and follow-up clinical referrals when required are offered to eligible women.

The programme aims to monitor closely any changes to public health advice to ensure continuity of end-to-end service delivery and continue to issue invitations and reminders to all participants as their screening date falls due. To enable excellence in service delivery the programme is scheduled to implement a nationally agreed GP/Clinic Entities contract, agree memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with colposcopy and histology units, and tender for external services including laboratory services, printing/posting and consumables. CervicalCheck continues to work closely with colposcopy units and the National Women & Infants Health Programme to ensure capacity is available for the increase in colposcopy referrals arising as a result of the introduction of HPV testing.

Thanks to the efforts of our sampletakers and the ongoing high levels of attendance by those invited for cervical screening, CervicalCheck is now back on track after difficulties posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the HSE cyber attack. During the first half of 2021 the programme saw an unprecedented rise in the number of participants attending for screening and by the end of the year, CervicalCheck operated at 14% above capacity for 2021. The programme will continue to deliver and enhance quality throughout the screening programme by monitoring against quality assurance standards for operations and other quality improvement projects. CervicalCheck programme will continue to maximise uptake of the screening programme through targeted communication and promotion amongst the eligible population. CervicalCheck will continue to oversee performance through the programme's Clinical Advisory Groups (CAG) and Senior Management Team (SMT).

BowelScreen

The primary goal of BowelScreen, the national bowel screening programme, is to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer in men and women in Ireland. Bowel cancer is the second most common newly diagnosed cancer in men, and the third most common in women. The number of new bowel cancer cases is expected to increase significantly over the next 10 years, due mainly to an increasing and ageing population. The primary objective of bowel cancer screening is to detect and remove pre-cancerous adenomas in the lining of the bowel, thereby making colorectal cancer screening a preventative health measure. BowelScreen invites men and women aged 60-69 years to take a free bowel screening test every two years.

The programme experienced significant impact from the changing Covid-19 environment and the cyber attack throughout 2021. A priority for the programme in 2022 is to stabilise the programme's invitation pattern, maximise targeted communication and promotion of bowel screening amongst the eligible population. Additionally, the programme aims to maximise capacity within endoscopy units, restore productivity to 2019 levels, and to work with new hospitals to establish a BowelScreen endoscopy service to provide additional endoscopy capacity for the programme.

Diabetic RetinaScreen

Diabetic RetinaScreen (DRS) is for people in Ireland with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes and who are at risk of retinopathy. The primary goal for the programme is to identify any diabetic retinopathy changes to the back of the eye and to treat these changes as early as possible to reduce or prevent damage to an individual's sight.

Throughout 2021 DRS maintained screening and treatment nationally during the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the HSE cyber attack. Maintaining screening throughout a pandemic was not without its challenges, however the programme managed to ensure that there was minimal impact to capacity. The most significant challenge to the programme has been to deliver a reduction to the number of delayed appointments for patients in DRS treatment clinics. The programme continues to work closely with all treatment clinics to support measures to reduce these delays.

A priority for the programme continues to be the management and delivery of its operational projects, in addition to maximising capacity in line with ongoing quality improvements to all elements of the programme. To continue the delivery of the DRS screening service, the programme will carry out a new tender process for screening service provision.

Public Health

The Public Health team plays a lead role in supporting the National Screening Service by delivering system-wide improvements and the provision of expert public health advice to our four screening programmes via their programme management team meetings, QA Committees, clinical advisory groups and ad-hoc working groups. They also provide expert public health advice to the Interval Cancer Project via the Legal Framework Group and the Communications Interval Cancer Implementation Group.

Public Health collaborates with colleagues in the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP). The Health Promotion team continues to act as 'Access Officers' for three of the screening programmes providing tailored responses and supports to enable participation in screening services for those with additional needs. Health Promotion provides ongoing training and education sessions for various audiences. Throughout 2022 the Public Health team will continue to build on the resourcing of the team to enhance its capabilities to support programmes and projects when required.

Client Services

Client Services provides a standardised approach to the coordination and management of client record requests and responses to GDPR & FOI requests. It also provides records for the State Claims Agency (SCA), and client solicitors, responds to CervicalCheck Ex-Gratia enquiries and the CervicalCheck Tribunal. The department provides support for departments and programmes in the management of complaints and compliance. A key project priority for the department throughout 2021 to support these core functions was the development and implementation of a Client Management System (CMS) however this project had to be formally paused and deferred to 2022 due to its dependence on external resources impacted by Covid-19 and the cyber attack. This project is a priority to restart in 2022 subject to the availability of this external resource.

Human Resources (HR)

HR aims to continue to deliver a professional service across the NSS and build on the rapport and strong working relationships between HR and programmes/functions and staff. HR will work closely with programme managers to support and advise on workforce planning, employee relations and will provide the necessary reports/analytics when required. The team will continue to roll out Performance Achievement to staff across the NSS and will continue to work on other HR priorities including payroll, attendance management and training.

HR will continue its work with the Information Governance (IG) steering committee and will work with the new IG Lead to determine the process for removal of duplicate records where required, this is anticipated to be a long-term project.

HR has only one project which will roll over to 2022 which will be reviewed when the IG Lead commences in post. All other projects have completed specific project phases and subsequent phases have been incorporated into HR's priority objectives for 2022.

Programme Evaluation Unit (PEU)

Core operational functions provided by PEU include; routine data for quality assurance committees, clinical advisory groups and/or executive management teams for the four screening programmes. Data is collated and provided for CervicalCheck's annual colposcopy forum and BreastCheck's annual multidisciplinary meeting. PEU also supports the four screening programmes by providing screening data for programme reports and data quality management. The team has a central research function and undertakes a number of research projects; both internally and in collaboration with external stakeholders. PEU supports the three interval cancer implementation groups by liaising with the National Cancer Registry of Ireland (NCRI), data exchange and interval cancer measurement.

Communications

Effective communication and engagement is fundamental to how we manage, deliver and improve our services. It benefits the general public, people who use our services, staff and all of our stakeholders. We know that honest, transparent and frequent communications in healthcare improves outcomes for the people who use our services. We also know that two-way communication is integral to ensuring that our services are informed by the experiences of staff, patients, people who use our services and families. A key priority for Communications in 2022 is to progress work on a collaborative project with the NSS Public Health team to develop an Information Hub which will transform how the NSS and screening programmes communicate with all stakeholders. The Communications and Public Health teams are partnering on the development and progression of the Information Hub. Together the teams will embed effective engagement with key stakeholders (including patients and the public) to improve the overall quality of communications. This will support us to better meet population needs and to demonstrate our values of care; compassion; trust and learning.

Part of the daily operations of the Communications department is our response to queries, complaints and information requests across government, the press, social media, information lines and FOIs. We respond and update material for the four screening programmes, their websites and the NSS website. We provide corporate communication services and support the information needs of the organisation. We also manage and facilitate information sharing across a number of platforms and provide responses to external requests. We identify and deliver skills development for staff engaging in external communications such as media appearances. We build and foster positive relationships with key media personnel.

Strategy, Business & Projects (SBP)

The Strategy, Business and Projects function is responsible for business planning and reporting. This involves liaising with programmes and functions across the NSS to develop a suite of documentation for internal and external stakeholders against agreed timelines. A key element of responsibility for the SBP function, in conjunction with the NSS Finance team, is leading the annual national service planning process.

The SBP function, through the Project Oversight Group, provides oversight, and supports the successful delivery of current key projects. Members of the SBP team lead key projects on behalf of the NSS. The team also provides ad-hoc support to projects/initiatives when required. A significant element of the team's work in 2022 will be the development of the NSS strategy.

Finance

The National Screening Service has a budget for 2022 of €123.4m as per the National Service Plan. The Finance team's core operational deliverables for 2022 includes management of the NSS budget, and working closely with all stakeholders to ensure service delivery as efficiently as possible. There will be a focus on review and monitoring of our processes and controls across finance and procurement. We will work to ensure all expenditure is carried out in line with our budget and make savings where possible. There will be a strong emphasis on increasing financial accountability across all programmes and functions.

In addition, a 'Cost Effectiveness' project which focused on ensuring funding is utilised efficiently across the organisation was delivered during 2021 and will now form part of the Finance team's 'business as usual' (BAU) operations to embed this development across all programmes and functions going forward.

Information and Computer Technology (ICT)

The National Screening Service ICT function supports the four screening programmes and all associated support functions through the IT helpdesk and day-to-day support of IT 'patch' management. A key priority this year is to continue to support the continuity of all business functionalities achieved through remote working by ensuring end-user laptop/PC capabilities are maintained.

The ICT team's core operational deliverables for 2022 includes: on-going technical support; network security; server maintenance; management of outsourced printer functions; and programme specific database and development work. ICT will continue to further develop, strengthen and improve our cyber security following the cyber attack on the HSE in 2021.

Quality Safety and Risk Management (QSRM)

The Quality Safety and Risk Management function oversees the systematic integration and monitoring of quality, safety and risk management into the delivery of services across the NSS. We provide leadership to ensure quality, safety and risk management standards are maintained as a high priority for the NSS. We manage and improve quality and risk management systems and processes within the NSS and ensure that there are clear quality and safety objectives for all work within the NSS.

In addition the QSRM function supports a proactive quality and safety culture within screening and oversees rigorous and systematic monitoring. We support the NSS CEO in relation to the Performance and Accountability Framework as it applies to quality, safety and risk management.

Appendix 1

National Service Plan 2022

National Screening Service

The National Screening Service (NSS) delivers four national population-based screening programmes, for bowel, breast and cervical cancer, and for detecting threatening retinopathy in people with diabetes. These programmes, working with patient, advocacy and wider stakeholder groups, aim to reduce morbidity and mortality in the population through early detection of disease and treatment.

Programme/Department Lead Key

- BC BreastCheck
- CC CervicalCheck
- BS BowelScreen
- DRS Diabetic RetinaScreen
- PH Public Health
- CS Client Services
- HR Human Resources
- PEU Programme Evaluation Unit
- C Communications
- SBP Strategy, Business & Projects
- F Finance
- ICT Information and Communication Technologies
- CS RM Quality, Safety and Risk Management

Priority areas for action 2022

National Screening Programme

- Continue the implementation of the Expert Reference Group's recommendations on the interval cancer audits;



- Continue to enhance NSS client services to ensure patients and families have access to records for all screening programmes by developing a dedicated Client Management System;



- Continue to develop and strengthen information governance within the NSS;



- Implement a Communications Strategy, in conjunction with National Communications, to ensure continued support, education and information for the public on screening programmes;



- Pilot an Information Hub to bring a standardised, coordinated and consistent approach to the development and review of information resources for audiences including patients, the public and healthcare professionals;



- Enhance ICT systems and applications to yield a direct improvement to NSS ICT operations and add an extended, improved capacity for monitoring and evaluation of current procedures and processes.



BowelScreen

- Maximise uptake through targeted communication and promotion amongst eligible men and women aged 60-69 years;



- In line with the [National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026](#), commence planning for an increase in age-range for BowelScreen by one year (programme age range will extend to 59-69).



BreastCheck

- Maximise uptake to the BreastCheck screening programme through targeted communication and promotion amongst the eligible population;



- Develop and implement an upgrade to the Client and Radiology Information System to ensure the uninterrupted operation and continuity of the system for the clinical, operational and administrative day-to-day delivery of the BreastCheck service;



- Develop a learning and development culture within the BreastCheck units to support better retention and development of staff and support the high-quality and efficient operational service currently provided for service users.



CervicalCheck

- Maximise uptake of CervicalCheck screening through targeted communication and promotion amongst the eligible population;



- Continue the construction and resourcing of the National Cervical Screening Laboratory at the Coombe Women and Infants' University Hospital (due to be operational in 2022);



- Implement the capacity enhancement actions requirement for the forecasted increase in colposcopy referrals expected to arise as a result of the introduction of HPV testing and provide additional staffing, augmented with consultant sessions, to maximise the use of colposcopy services and enable a more efficient throughput of service users;



- Carry out quality improvement projects with the objective of improving timely access to data, e.g. histology and colposcopy database projects.



Diabetic RetinaScreen

- Maximise uptake to Diabetic RetinaScreen through targeted communication and promotion amongst the eligible population aged 12 years and older;



- Implement an extended digital surveillance screening pilot and model of care that will enable 2,000 participants to be seen in a community-based service rather than hospital service.





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