

Clinical Leads/Directors of Screening
Programme Managers
Cervical Screening Provider Leads
Primary Care
STP Chief Officers
Trust CEOs
London LMC
Directors of Public Health

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Dear colleagues

Rescheduling and Recovery of Adult & Cancer Screening Programmes

Given the current and rapidly evolving situation with Coronavirus in the UK, adult and cancer screening services (AAA, Bowel, Breast, Cervical and DESP) are unable to continue to provide a service that meets the criteria and principles that underpin screening programmes or to maintain the nationally mandated pathways or quality standards. In these circumstances, screening appointments should be rescheduled and patients tracked.

Equally, given the threat posed by Covid-19 infection and the national delay strategy of social distancing and social isolation, the benefits from maintaining screening through these programmes are outweighed by the risk posed to the NHS and the population by Covid-19.

Following agreement from the London COVID-19 Oversight Group on 25th March 2020, appointments for routine Adult and Cancer Screening programmes will be rescheduled as follows:

- Reschedule all routine invitations for primary screening for an initial period of two weeks. A more detailed recommendation for each programme is contained in the table below. This will need to be further refined taking account of high-risk groups.
- Temporarily stop initiatives to increase screening coverage. Some of these are led by NHS EI and others by other organisations both local and national.
- Work with relevant clinicians to develop protocols for people who have already had a positive test as what action should be taken to, as far as possible, follow the routine screening pathway, taking account of whether
 - the individual meets the criteria of being vulnerable to Covid-19,
 - the patient has possible symptoms of Covid-19,
 - the risks to the individual from delaying the diagnosis of screen detected disease is greater than the risk Covid 19 infection.
- This agreement does not affect the Antenatal and Newborn screening programmes or the childhood immunisation programme at this stage. These programmes will continue

The rationale for this decision is that:

- Most people invited for screening will be healthy individuals who do not have the condition that is being screened for. As the Covid 19 pandemic in England is developing, screening services are seeing a significant increase in patients cancelling and not attending their



appointments. This increase is seen for people at population risk, high risk and for second stage assessment appointments.

- Directors of Screening and their more senior management are increasingly expressing concern about inviting ‘at risk’ and frail patients into health care settings, especially those groups who are being advised to self-isolate. They are also concerned that inviting healthy individuals into health care settings will increase their risk of exposure to Covid-19 and increases the rate of spread of the infection as well as increasing the risk of Covid-19 to health care workers.
- Trusts are minimising the numbers of symptomatic patients attending Outpatients and transferring their services to telephone appointments. Inviting healthy patients without symptoms, the majority of whom will have a normal screening result contradicts the advice of social distancing and self-isolation and increases the risk of screening subjects and screening practitioners exposure to Covid-19.

We understand that clinical guidance for each screening programme is being developed, until such a time as this becomes available, we have agreed the following advice for London services:

Programme	Regional advice
Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reschedule routine invitations & reminders • Screen those who have appointments (venues permitting) • Defer all surveillance for 3 months as no routine elective surgery being performed
Antenatal & Newborn Screening Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue as time critical
Bowel Cancer Screening Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reschedule routine invitations & reminders for FIT and bowel scope. • Do not send FIT kits. • Continue endoscopy for people who have tested FIT +ve already in the pathway • Discuss surveillance protocols with Directors of Screening in line with symptomatic surveillance
Breast Screening Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reschedule invitations & reminders • As far as possible continue with people already in the pathway who have undergone initial mammography. Triage before attendance. Maintain a list of women requesting appointment changes or self-referring for primary screening • Stop Age X trial • Discuss those at High risk due to family history with Directors of screening as may be younger than routine cohort
Cervical Screening Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reschedule routine invitations & reminders • Defer routine samples for up to 6 months and for 3 months for women at high risk • Process and report samples for people who have had a sample taken • Triage women before attendance and defer appointments for follow up and women with low-grade abnormalities in line with agreed protocols
Diabetic Eye Screening Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop routine invitations & reminders • Where possible continue with people already in the pathway • Pregnant patients, people on 6 months surveillance and OCT and surveillance at 6 months or less without OCT to be clinically reviewed and decision to be made



Immunisation Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue childhood immunisations as per RCGP guidance• Suspend school's vaccination programmes
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We, in the Public Health Commissioning team, will work closely with providers and the London Screening Quality Assurance team to monitor the number of people whose screening appointments have been rescheduled and to ensure that, once able, screening recovery plans are implemented in a safe and timely manner.

We will forward national clinical and technical guidance on managing adult and cancer screening programmes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as it becomes available.

Yours sincerely



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