

DATE]

[H&C NUMBER

[DOB]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for attending for your recent cervical screening test.

I am writing to let you know that your recent cervical screening result showed minor changes to the cells in your cervix. These changes sometimes happen, they are not cancer and, in most cases, do not lead to cancer. The cell changes can sometimes indicate infection with the Human papillomavrus (HPV) which can cause cervical abnormalities.

The laboratory also tested your screening sample for HPV and reported that there was no evidence of HPV infection. This means that your risk of developing cervical cancer is very low at this time.

Your next screening test is due on or around **xx xx xxxx**. We will send you a reminder letter nearer the time.

Cervical screening will pick up most changes to your cervix but can’t find them all. Changes can also happen between tests so it is important to go for a screening test every time you’re invited. If you have any unusual symptoms like discharge or irregular bleeding, don’t wait for your next test, but consult your GP.

Please note temporary changes to the way cervical screening samples are processed in the laboratory were introduced from March 2023. This has been done to manage the current backlog. Under the new temporary process, cervical samples sent to laboratories as part of the Screening Programme are being ‘co-tested’. This means that samples, firstly, undergo a test to check for the presence of HPV and, secondly, the samples are examined by a microscope (cytology) to check for the presence of cell changes.

After the first step, those samples that test positive for HPV are prioritised for cytology. All cervical samples are being examined by cytology in due course. The new temporary process aims to manage the clinical risk caused by delays in cytology investigations by identifying those patients who are at higher risk of cervical cell changes. Testing samples by both cytology screening and HPV testing (co-testing) is an effective and safe screening method.

The PHA website contains details about the temporary laboratory changes, as well as general information about the Cervical Screening Programme in Northern Ireland:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/service-development-and-screening/cervical-cancer-screening>

Specific information on Human papillomavirus can be found here:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/human-papillomavirus-hpv>

If you have any questions about your test result or would like more information about cervical screening or HPV testing, please contact your GP or **xxx xxx**.

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Yours sincerely

Dr XXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX