

DATE]

[H&C NUMBER

[DOB]

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

Thank you for attending for your recent cervical screening test.

I am writing to let you know you that your recent cervical screening result showed evidence of Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, but no changes to the cells in your cervix.

HPV is a common virus and most people will have it at some point in their life without knowing. Certain types of HPV are associated with an increased risk of cervical cancer. In most cases, your immune system will clear up HPV infection without it causing any problems. However, occasionally HPV can cause changes to the cells of your cervix that, over time, can turn into cancer if left untreated.

The results of your screen have shown no changes to the cells in your cervix. However, we would like to invite you to come back for another screen in 12 months’ time to check if the HPV infection is gone. 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