

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Edition



The Covid-19 crisis has placed extraordinary stress on NHS resources.

Health resources are being diverted to areas of acute need and Government guidelines on social distancing and limiting patient contact have led many GP practices to move to remote (phone or online) consultations.

The necessary reallocation of resources required to address this crisis means that many established preventative health initiatives such as screening programmes need to be rescheduled.

Are cervical screening services affected by the Covid-19 crisis?

Yes, in a letter dated April 1, 2020, the Director of Primary Care and Public Health Commissioning, NHS/London Region, requested that the taking of cervical screening samples in primary care, CASH services and hospital gynae clinics be stopped until further notice.

When the guidelines for social distancing, social isolation and shielding are considered, the benefit of continuing to screen women is outweighed by the risk to sample takers and patients of continuing to take cervical screening samples during the current crisis.

A further communication clarifying this position will soon be available on the LMC website, www.lmc.org.uk.

How long will the cervical screening service in London be suspended?

In a separate communication on 31 March, 2020, covering all screening programmes, the Director of Primary Care and Public Health Commissioning, NHS/London Region, advised that routine cervical screening appointments be deferred for 6 months or 3 months if women are identified as high risk.

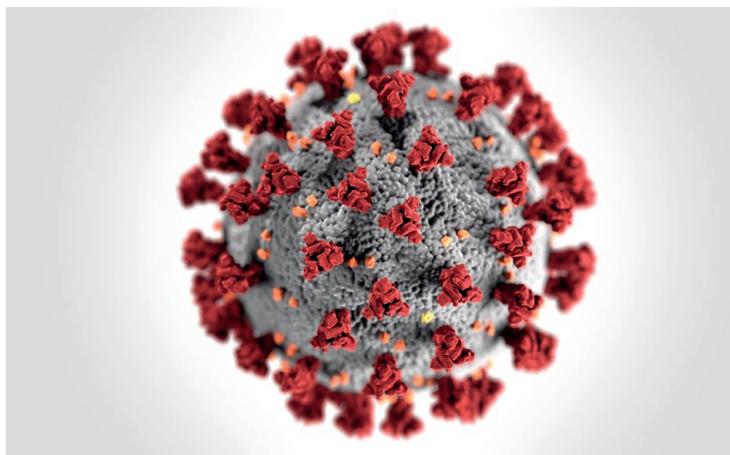
The situation with Covid-19 is however changing rapidly so further advice may be issued.

Will any CSL service be maintained during the suspension?

A skeleton CSL staff will be maintained either on-site or on-call to deal with any work in progress or any critical samples that require processing. Please note, work will be batched and longer than normal turnaround times will be experienced.

Staff will also be available to answer any urgent questions and clinical queries.

It is also likely that CSL HPV testing equipment and staff may need to be redeployed to help meet national demands for Covid-19 testing which would be a very sensible use of these resources while screening is suspended.



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Lead GPs
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Gynae clinics
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01 April 2020

Dear colleagues

Rescheduling and Recovery of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme in London

We are writing to clarify the advice for cervical screening in London

Given the current and rapidly evolving situation with Coronavirus in the UK, the cervical screening programme is unable to provide a service that meets the criteria and principles that underpin screening programmes or to maintain nationally mandated pathways or quality standards. In these circumstances, screening should be paused, and screening subjects rescheduled and tracked.

Given the threat posed by Covid-19 infection and the national delay strategy of social distancing, social isolation and shielding, the benefits from maintaining screening through the programme are outweighed by the risk posed to the NHS and the population by Covid-19. This pause in local screening programmes will free up valuable resource to assist with the NHS COVID-19 response.

We are requesting that, until further notice, no cervical samples are taken in primary care, CASH services or hospital gynae clinics.

We, in the London Public Health Commissioning team, will work closely with trusts and primary care providers to monitor the number of people whose screening appointments have been rescheduled and to ensure that, once able, screening restarts in a safe and timely manner.

Yours sincerely



Liz Wise
Director of Primary Care & Public Health Commissioning
NHSE/I London Region

NHS England and NHS Improvement



Are CSL couriers still going to come to the surgery?

Over the past few weeks the number of GP surgeries that have moved to remote consultation has increased and the number of CSL samples to collect has drastically decreased. If CSL couriers found that surgeries were closed when they called they left a calling card (see below) advising the surgery to call if they needed a pick up.



SORRY WE MISSED YOU

Our courier called today to pick up samples but was unable to contact anyone. You were visited on:

<input type="checkbox"/> Monday	@	<input type="text" value="TIME"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday	@	<input type="text" value="TIME"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Wednesday	@	<input type="text" value="TIME"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Thursday	@	<input type="text" value="TIME"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Friday	@	<input type="text" value="TIME"/>

If you require an urgent pick up please contact TDL Collect on **0207 307 7373**
Use extension '3152' for enquiries between 9am - 5pm

Are the CSL couriers helping with other pathology pick-ups during the crisis?

Yes, TDL Collect are providing essential pathology sample transport between the Nightingale Field Hospital and BARTS/The London Hospital.

This service runs every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The staff previously doing CSL pick-ups form the majority of the workforce for the Nightingale service and their flexibility and enthusiasm to participate has been incredible.

What about the women with abnormal screening results that have been referred to colposcopy?

NHSE/NHSI and PHE have issued initial guidance to colposcopy centres on deferring lower risk cases while continuing to see and arrange appropriate treatment for higher risk women. CSL will complete all direct referral processes on the residual cases received.

Colposcopy clinics will communicate with women by phone and/or in writing and a series of letters covering different clinical scenarios has been supplied in the initial guidance document.

When screening resumes how will we be notified?

Plans for how to re-establish screening services after the Covid-19 crisis are currently being formulated. It is likely NHSE/NHSI and PHE guidance will be issued well in advance of the printing and distribution of cervical screening invitation letters.

CSL will continue to work closely with NHSE/NHSI and will issue a further Sample Taker Update discussing when and how the resumption of cervical screening in London will be conducted.

Until then please take care, stay safe and observe social distancing recommendations.

CSL couriers have now temporarily suspended all routine CSL-only pick-ups and have moved to a 'call as needed' service until further notice.

What if I have already taken a sample that is now in the surgery and needs to be tested?

If you have a CSL sample at your surgery please call **TDL Collect on 020 7307 7373** to arrange transport to the lab for processing.

STAY AT HOME – PROTECT THE NHS – SAVE LIVES

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