

July 2019

## **Introduction of more sensitive testing process in cervical screening**

Following recommendations from the UK National Screening Committee, for the NHS cervical screening programme, cytology screening will be replaced as the first line of testing with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) primary screen due to the increased sensitivity of the test.

HPV is the cause of 99% of all cervical cancers, and this change could prevent around 600 additional cancers a year.

People partaking in the cervical screening programme will see no change. Samples will continue to be taken and the results returned in the normal way. This change is an improvement in the way the sample is tested.

To support the rollout of HPV primary screening by 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement has recently undertaken an open and transparent national procurement process to secure service providers to implement HPV primary screening and deliver high quality and effective cervical screening services across nine lots covering the whole of England.

Following this process, we can confirm that Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust has been announced as the new provider serving the North East and Yorkshire region.

Commissioners are now in the process of working closely with existing cervical screening service providers across the North East and Yorkshire to ensure a safe and well managed transfer of activities to Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust.

It is planned that full geographical coverage of HPV primary will be achieved across England by the end of December 2019, and that the full consolidation of laboratories from 46 to eight will be completed by the end of March 2020.

We recognise that these changes will create some uncertainty for staff currently working within the service. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to identify opportunities for retraining and redeployment across existing pathology networks and service providers will be touch with their staff to confirm transition arrangements.

We would like to thank you for your support with the wider changes to the programme as we move towards full implementation of HPV primary screening into the system, resulting in better outcomes for people and a continually effective cervical screening programme.

