

Breast Cancer Screening recovery services

Breast Cancer Screening services across London have been severely impacted and providers face a pressing challenge in resuming access to screening in the 'new normal'. With that in mind, it is important to focus **on the immediate needs of the population** served and how we can further improve our services in the medium to long-term.

Background

- All routine breast screening was paused in the week commencing 24th March. Providers maintained services only for those with positive screens and those at high risk.
- The backlog as of October 2020 is at 168,337 women. At the pre-Covid rate of uptake we would have expected to diagnose around 900 cancer within this number of women.

IPC constraints have increased the length of an average screening from 6 to 12 minutes, effectively **cutting capacity**.

In order to adopt IPC changes requirements mobile screening units (where 20% of mammography takes place) have been modified. These are now all IPC compliant.

What does it mean to recover the service?

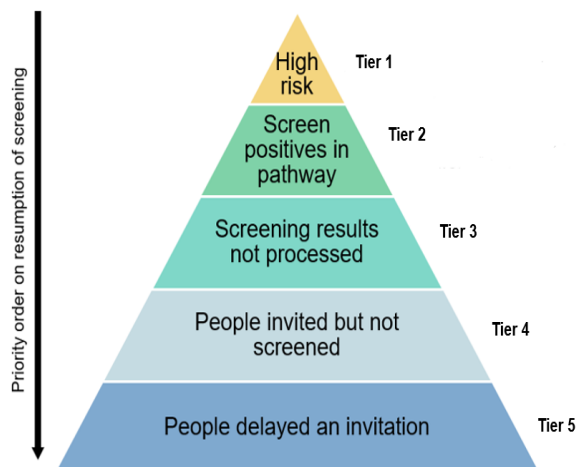
A recovery programme for Breast cancer Screening has been established across London. A series of interventions identified will primarily focus on clearing the backlog of women

- women invited for screening but not yet screened
- those who have been delayed in being sent an invitation

Women at high risk due to family history continued to be invited, but DNA rates were high. Please encourage these women to attend wherever possible

The pyramid diagram below shows the priority order for inviting women

Restart pyramid



Current estimated milestones for recovery

Milestone	Milestone
women who were invited to attend during the first lockdown and whose appointment was cancelled.	end of November 2020
These are women who have had their invitation delayed	Autumn 2021

What are the implications for Primary Care?

A series of changes are being implemented to increase capacity over and above the capacity available before the pandemic. Women are being invited for screening, but some women may have experienced delay or be anxious about attending.

- Please reassure your patients that Infection control measures are in place. Further information can be found in annex 1
- Open invites – The invitation process is gradually changing from the direct appointments (specific date and time) to **'open' invitations** which means asking women to telephone to make an appointment. A centralised number will be provided in the invite letter.
- Pausing Self-referrals for >71 years age group – Whilst we are trying to restore a service that is safe, the recovery process will focus on the clients aged 50 to 70 included in the above-mentioned groups. Patients over 71 will not be able to book their mammogram directly with the screening service.
- Stopping recruitment for the Age Extension Trial – No invitations will be sent for patients aged 47-49 and 71-73. (Note there are some invitations already in the system. These will be honoured)

Targeting Inequalities

- Uptake in London before the service was paused was below the national minimum standard of 70% and it stood consistently at **approximately 65%**. This means that 35% of all invitations for screening were not taken up.
- Women in the **most deprived groups are generally less likely to participate**.
- There is evidence that women from **ethnic minority groups are less likely to attend breast screening** compared to White British women, but estimates vary by study and by minority ethnic group.
- Women with **disabilities are less likely to participate** in breast screening– this is particularly the case for those with disabilities relating to self-care or vision, or for those with 3 or more disabilities.

What are we asking to Primary Care?

We are asking Primary Care professionals to help us targeting inequalities and support women to access Breast Cancer Screening.

In your practice,

- Be proactive in contacting women about their cancer screening and raising it opportunistically in other appointments.
- Review practice records or use final non-responder lists to identify where screening may have been affected.

Understand the barriers to participating which may be exacerbated by the pandemic.

- Those that prefer not to participate in screening at the moment should be safety netted. They should be reminded to contact the screening service so that appointment can be offered to somebody else. They will be offered to re-arrange the appointment at a future date.
- All women should be advised to seek advice from their GP if they notice any breast changes that are not normal for them.
- As a gentle reminder, any woman who presents with concerning symptoms should be referred via the two-week rule rather than advising her to wait for her screening invitation.

The Breast Screening Hub helpline remains open for women who have queries -0800 169 2692.

Patients can be directed to the London Breast Screening Website <https://www.london-breastscreening.org.uk/home.aspx> where further information is available.