

NHS Cervical Screening Programme – Digital communications

NHS England is transforming digital services for screening programmes, with a vision that a third of all NHS interactions will be delivered through the NHS App and other digital tools within 5 years. As part of this, the NHS Cervical Screening Programme is introducing digital communications, and all Cervical Screening invitations, reminders and normal results have now moved to a new digital process.

Communication changes

In 2025, we started sending digital invites, reminders and normal results to all eligible people. Following comprehensive user research demonstrating strong support for receiving screening results digitally, **the programme will soon make results requiring referral to colposcopy available through the NHS App**. This will ensure that all cervical screening communications will be available digitally. Initial feedback, including from our Customer Contact Centre indicating no concerns raised by users to date, suggests good acceptance of digital communications.

All communications will follow a fall-back process:

- First, an NHS App message will be sent. This will appear as an NHS App notification.
- If someone doesn't have notifications switched on for the NHS App, they may also receive an SMS message to remind them to check the NHS App.
- If the NHS App message isn't read within 72 hours of delivery or for those where a digital communication isn't possible, a physical letter will be posted as a backup.

Actions for cervical screening providers and laboratories:

- Please can sample takers inform patients attending cervical screening that if they have the NHS App downloaded, their results will be delivered via the NHS App within 2-3 weeks. If they don't have NHS App, they will be sent a letter in the post.

- When a patient has asked for their result to be sent to an address different to their patient record, please make them aware that if they have the NHS App, that will be attempted in the first instance and if this is not read, only then will a letter be issued to the address provided.
- Sample takers are reminded that they still need to populate HMR101 forms with a deliverable postal address in order that the result does not fail NHS Cervical Screening Management System (CSMS) validation rules. A correspondence address of NHS App **is not acceptable**.
- Participants may ask you questions about digital communications so please familiarise yourself with this document and we would be grateful for sample takers continued support in encouraging your patients to download the NHS App and turn on notifications: www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/
- Laboratories will no longer be able to stop a result communication being issued to a participant, once these files have been accepted by CSMS.

Benefits of digital communications

There are many advantages to this transition, for both cervical screening and those we serve. Through the implementation of digital communications, cervical screening will provide more accessibility options for those who require it, whilst enabling faster communications through more modern digital channels. Better data validation will result in improved accuracy, fewer returned letters and insights into when NHS App messages have been opened. Additionally there will be substantial cost savings, helping to protect NHS resources for the future.

This is a step toward a **more agile, data-informed, and participant-centred service**.

There are no changes to the commercial arrangement that is currently in place. Use of the NHS App is free, and SMS messages sent from the national programme will be included in the existing commercial arrangement. Any additional SMS messages that GP surgeries send would come from the surgery.

Participant FAQs

Q: How do I download the NHS App?

A: The NHS App is available on iOS and Android through the App Store or Google Play Store. Further information about the app is available here: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/>

Q: I received a text message from NHSscreen to book my cervical screening appointment, is it genuine?

A: Yes, any SMS messages sent by Cervical Screening will come from NHSscreen.

Q: I have the NHS App downloaded; how do I ensure my notifications are switched on?

A: To manage your NHS App notifications: navigate to the NHS App and log in; select the **Account** icon in the top corner; select **Notifications** located under Settings. This page will show you whether your notifications are on or off. To make changes to your notifications, follow the link to your device settings.

Q: Can I book my cervical screening appointment through the NHS App invitation?

A: Your invitation will direct you to book your cervical screening appointment in the same way you do currently do – either by contacting your GP practice or a local sexual health service.

Q: Why have I received an invitation from both my GP surgery and the NHS App?

A: Some GP surgeries may already be using SMS or an app to send invitations for cervical screening. In this case, you may receive multiple invitations from both your GP surgery and the NHS App. Please note, if you have booked your appointment following receiving either invitation, your appointment is booked, and no further action is required.

Q: Can I still receive a physical letter if I need to?

A: Physical letters will continue to be sent to those who do not read this NHS App messages within 72 hours.

Q: Why is the NHS using digital communications?

A: By using faster, more accessible digital communications and enhanced accuracy, cervical screening programmes will improve engagement and achieve significant cost savings, ensuring the long-term sustainability of NHS resources. The use of digital communications also conforms to current best practices and expectations when interacting with organisations.

Q: What is the difference between the NHS App and the app my GP surgery use?

A: The NHS App and apps used by GP surgeries are both used for accessing NHS services, but they are different platforms. The NHS App is a more comprehensive platform that includes features from apps such as 'My GP' and 'Patient Access' and is now recommended by the NHS as the preferred way to access these services. For cervical screening, you will only receive communications via the NHS App.



Q: Is it only cervical screening communications I can expect on the NHS app?

A: Bowel cancer screening is also rolling out digital-first communications in 2026. We will provide updates when any changes are made to other screening programmes.

Q: Will I also receive my cervical screening results via the NHS App?

A: If you have the NHS App downloaded, your results will be delivered via the NHS App within 2-3 weeks. If you don't have NHS App, you will be sent a letter in the post.

If you have any questions, please contact: england.digitalscreening@nhs.net