

From the Permanent Secretary  
Sir Chris Wormald



## Department of Health & Social Care

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Dame Meg Hillier MP  
Chair of Public Accounts Committee  
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Sent via email to: [pubaccom@parliament.uk](mailto:pubaccom@parliament.uk)

Dear Chair

10 November 2022

### House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts Ninety-Sixth Report of Session 2017-2019, Adult Health Screening

I am writing to provide the Committee with an update from the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS Digital and NHS England on progress against the outstanding recommendation in the above-named report.

**5: PAC conclusion: We are extremely doubtful that NHS England will be able to successfully bring the failing IT system that supports the cervical programme back in-house, remove the backlog of samples that are waiting to be tested, and roll-out a new testing regime in just 6 months' time.**

**5: PAC recommendation: NHS England should set out a clear plan for how it intends to deliver this inherently risky project on time without making the service provided to women undergoing screening even worse.**

NHS England acknowledges that implementation of the new NHS Cervical Screening Management System (CSMS) is delayed, however is continuing to work with NHS Digital and DHSC to deliver this project. The CSMS will replace the existing National Health Application and Infrastructure Service (NHAIS) based call and recall system. While work to implement the CSMS remains underway, the Cervical Screening Administration Service (CSAS) continues to operate successfully using NHAIS.

Acknowledging that the CSMS system has not been delivered to the planned timetable, NHS England has taken steps to strengthen technical expertise and leadership for the project. A new and experienced Programme Director and an Executive Director of Product Delivery has been appointed by NHS Digital, and the National Director of Vaccination and Screening assumed SRO responsibility for the Digital Transformation of Screening in May 2022. Working closely with colleagues in NHS England and the CSAS Director, the Programme Director has completed a bottom up review of the programme, agreeing actions to improve delivery confidence and a revised timetable for implementing CSMS.

The review has shown that further development work is needed to ensure the solution can support projected usage patterns and is fully supportable and resilient. Work on a revised plan for the CSMS project is ongoing, with final implementation of the system now scheduled between October and December 2023.

The revised implementation plan has now been agreed by DToS Programme board. There will be 4 major releases of the CSMS product, leading to a planned go live on or before 20 November 2023. The first of the planned major releases, the "Core" release, addressing historical underlying technical issues, was delivered ahead of schedule on 18th October 2022. Delivery is currently on plan and the Executive Transformation Group (ETG) has given interim spend approval to January 2023 whilst the CSMS Business Case is progressed through HMT approvals.

A number of broader implementation activities remain in progress, including testing, training, communications and transition management. These activities will continue to run until the final, fully operational product is released, between October and December 2023. Phased product releases will be made from March 2023.

NHS England recognises the revised timetable represents a significant delay in completing the project and realising the associated benefits. However, good progress is being made to deliver the project against the updated plan and the NHS Cervical Screening Programme is continuing to improve coverage and turnaround times. The revised plan is expected to drive further improvements in these measures.

Yours sincerely,



**SIR CHRIS WORMALD**  
**PERMANENT SECRETARY**

