



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Ashley Dalton MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

PO-1618887

Ms Athena Lamnisis
Co-Chair
ACCESS Consensus Group
By email to: secretariat@accesscg.org

25 September 2025

Dear Ms Lamnisis,

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 June, co-signed by a number of organisations, about cervical cancer prevention. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I would like to thank the members of the ACCESS Consensus Group for their work on developing the consensus statement, *Turning the tide: tackling inequalities and barriers in cervical screening*. I appreciate your shared concerns.

The national cancer plan will have patients at its heart and will cover the entirety of the cancer pathway, from referral and diagnosis through to treatment and ongoing care, and prevention. It will seek to improve every aspect of cancer care to better experience and outcomes for people with cancer. Our goal is to reduce the number of lives lost to cancer over the next ten years.

Fit for the Future: The 10 Year Health Plan for England reiterates the NHS's ambition to eliminate cervical cancer by 2040. NHS England is responsible for, and committed to, delivering the Cervical Cancer Elimination (CCE) plan in collaboration with Departmental colleagues and other partners. Delivering the plan and making progress towards its targets is a key priority for NHS England.

NHS England is also working closely within its tripartite partners and colleagues from the Department for Education to address operational barriers such as school access, data sharing, and the role of schools in supporting the school-aged vaccination programmes.

It continues to develop inclusive materials based on insights from research to better reach underserved communities. This includes working with trusted voices and arms-length bodies such as the UK Health Security Agency to align resources. For example, vaccination leaflets for human papillomavirus (HPV) have been translated into over 30 different languages, and NHS England will continue to work with faith leaders and partners to ensure materials are tailored and shared in the right way through the right people.

For Cervical Screening Awareness Week in June, NHS England launched its first ever cervical cancer elimination creative campaign and communications toolkit. The campaign seeks to create a strong sense of shared responsibility, increase awareness of the goal to eliminate cervical cancer, raise public awareness of HPV, and build confidence in both the HPV vaccine and the cervical screening programme.

NHS England is also taking steps to ensure appropriate follow-up for those who have not yet been screened or vaccinated. It recently launched the GP HPV campaign, which requires GPs to invite unvaccinated individuals aged 16-24 for their HPV vaccine as part of the GP contract. This campaign will run until 31 March 2026.

In addition, following a UK National Screening Committee recommendation, the Government has announced that in 2026 the NHS will offer HPV self-testing kits to women and people with a cervix who have rarely or never attended their cervical screening, also known as the under-screened group. The offer is limited to this group because there is currently uncertainty about whether self-testing is as effective as clinician-taken sampling for those who attend screening regularly.

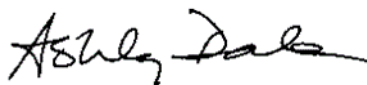
Under-screened individuals who are offered a HPV self-testing kit will still have the option of having a sample taken by a clinician, which remains the current universal offer in the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. The self-testing method only tests for the presence of HPV. Those who test positive will need a further sample to be taken by a clinician to obtain the necessary cells required for further testing. Providers will therefore still need to support reasonable adjustments.

Alongside its commitment to strengthening delivery and improving uptake of cervical screening and HPV vaccination, NHS England has recently established a CCE Squad to ensure there is a clear focus on meeting the targets set out in the CCE plan. The Squad will coordinate activities across vaccination and screening, support alignment with other parts of the health system, and explore other potential enablers and activities to accelerate progress and increase impact.

Engaging and maintaining relationships with stakeholders, including ACCESS UK, will be central to the Squad's work and to the ongoing delivery of the CCE plan. We are currently considering the most appropriate and effective mechanisms for achieving this.

Unfortunately, due to diary pressures, I am unable to commit to a meeting at this time. I hope the information in this reply is helpful, nonetheless. I would be grateful if you could share it with your co-signatories.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Dalton', with a stylized, cursive script.

ASHLEY DALTON