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Hackney Council  
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Dear Councillor Hayhurst

### **Breast screening services for Hackney residents**

Thank you for your letter seeking assurances about the breast screening services for Hackney residents.

The contract for breast screening services for women in Central and East London (CELBSS) was awarded to The Royal Free (RFH) in July 2018 following an open and transparent procurement (which we are legally obliged to conduct) led by NHS England (London). Between the start of the procurement process and contract award, the performance of the then Bart's Health screening service deteriorated by a significant extent by the time the RFH took it on.

Women are invited for screening every three years, based on their registered GP practice; a practice population will be invited once every three years. Invitations for screening across London are managed by the London Administrative Hub, in compliance with national guidelines and liaising closely with the clinical breast screening service, who are responsible for delivering capacity at their screening sites.

During the mobilisation from Bart's Health to RFH, there have been operational challenges resulting in cancellations and a diminished service for screening in all areas covered by the Central and East London catchment service including Hackney. We can confirm that significant progress has been made regarding the service workforce allowing services to be reinstated at the Homerton Hospital which serves most Hackney women.

Although recruitment of radiographers is at the forefront of the RFH's recovery plan, there is a national shortage of qualified mammographers and this shortage is impacting services nationwide. Since January 2018, the trust has been proactively recruiting to substantive, bank and agency positions. Their plan is to recruit 2 whole time mammographers per quarter and are broadly on track this quarter.

In response to your specific questions, we have some information from the National Breast Screening System (NBSS) which holds all breast screening data going back to 2016 when the Hub was established.

a) All women from Hackney who are invited to attend for breast screening are offered appointments at the Homerton screening site. Those women who wish to change their appointments or to self-refer for screening would, in line with national guidance, be offered appointments at another screening unit if there no appointments were available at their local site.

Approximately 25 women a month from the entire CELBSS catchment area (no data available for Hackney) will be offered an appointment at another screening site. In March 2018 this figure rose to 211 and in April the figure was 148. In July 2018 only 28 women were offered appointments at a different site and we interpret this as an improving trend.

b) Between February and April 2018, a total of 255 appointments for Hackney women were cancelled as shown in the table below:

CANCELLATION DETAILS					No Clients affected
SERVICE	CLINIC CODE	CLINIC DATE	TYPE (thinout/canx period)	REASON	
FLO	CH200	19/02/2018	Canx ALL DAY	Equipment Failure	36
FLO	CH200	14/03/2018	Canx ALL DAY	Staffing Capacity	90
FLO	CH200	21/03/2018	Canx ALL DAY	Staffing Capacity	129
Total					255

Source: NBSS

All women have been offered another appointment at the Homerton screening site.

c) Annual breast screening coverage between 2010 and 2017 (published data from <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>) is shown below:

Period	Number of Hackney women screened	Coverage of Hackney women as %	Coverage of London women as %	Coverage of England women as %
2010	8,727	60.9	66.9	76.9
2011	9,554	65.0	68.7	77.1
2012	9,804	64.0	69.2	76.9
2013	9,808	62.1	68.6	76.3
2014	9,626	61.0	68.9	75.9
2015	9,772	58.2	68.3	75.4
2016	11,110	63.1	69.2	75.5
2017	12,190	66.2	69.4*	75.4*

Source: Health and Social Care Information Centre (Open Exeter)/Public Health England

d) The latest data, June 2018, shows that all Hackney resident women invited for screening were offered an appointment within 40 months of their last screen. This is very similar to the other five sites in the CELBSS area.

e) In order to address the funding / training gap, Public Health England:

- Has worked with a trailblazer group to develop a new associate mammographer apprenticeship. This is now approved and PHE will look at introducing more apprenticeship schemes;
- Introduced a return to work toolkit for mammographers who wish to return to breast screening practice; You can find some more information here <https://phescreening.blog.gov.uk/2018/08/09/attracting-mammographers-back-into-screening/>
- Is currently completing workforce modelling with Health Education England, who commission training courses;
- Is working with the new breast academy to look at rationalising mammographic training and introducing more on-line training

f) RFH is committed to investing in overseas recruitment for nursing and radiography staff; this includes recruitment to breast screening posts. Previous appointments through this route have had no problems with acquiring Level 2 visas.

I hope this gives you some assurance but we would be more than happy to meet with you to answer further questions along with the provider Director of Screening if you would find that helpful.

Yours sincerely



Matthew Bazeley  
Director of Public Health Commissioning,  
Health in the Justice and Military Health