



21 December 2023

Deputy Paul Donnelly
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Our Ref: GM/Communications

PQ54758/23: To ask the Minister for Health the number of radiographers required to ensure BreastCheck screenings take place every two years for those who are eligible; and how many radiographers currently work for BreastCheck.

Dear Deputy,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question.

About BreastCheck

BreastCheck is Ireland's free breast screening programme. We screen healthy women who have no symptoms so that we can find and treat breast cancer at the earliest possible stage. We aim to provide breast screening for women aged 50 to 69, every two years and provide access to appropriate care for those who need further tests and treatment. We work to make BreastCheck services accessible to all, for example providing longer or group appointments, and information in braille and international languages.

There are four regional centres responsible for the delivery of BreastCheck throughout the country: Eccles Street and Merrion Road in Dublin; Newcastle Road in Galway; and Infirmary Road in Cork. As not all eligible women wish, or are able, to travel to one of these regional centres, an important principle for the BreastCheck programme is to offer screening services locally to women in locations convenient to where they live. To achieve this, each of the four screening units operates in tandem with our mobile units. The majority of women participating in BreastCheck have their mammogram in one of these 24 units.

Staffing

We need 1.8 radiographers per 10,000 women (approx. 105 radiographers) to offer screening to eligible women every two years. We have 70 radiographers on staff and are actively recruiting. We recruited 11 senior radiographers to our team in 2023. We are pleased that such a high level of people trained in this sought-after specialty have this year chosen to work in breast screening. However, our staffing levels reflect the fact that there is a national and international shortage of radiographers across all healthcare facilities. Actions to address recruitment challenges include the development of a 10-year strategic workforce plan. A new Breast Radiology Workforce Group has also been established. More details of our work to promote screening as a workplace of choice can be found in our new 5-year strategic plan, [Choose Screening: Together we can make a difference](#).

Being breast aware

We continue to emphasise to our participants that BreastCheck is a screening service for well women within the population age range (50-69 years) and is not for women with symptoms. If a person has any concerns or symptoms concerning their breast health, they should not wait for or attend screening and should instead contact their GP who will give them the appropriate advice.

It is important that every woman is breast aware. This means knowing what is normal for her so that if any unusual change occurs, she will recognise it. If cancer is found early, treatment is

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more likely to be successful. It is therefore important for women to get into the habit of looking at and checking their breasts at least on a monthly basis. More information on checking your breasts is available on www.breastcheck.ie

Women who have additional questions regarding breast screening can contact Freephone 1800 45 45 55 from 9am-6pm, Monday to Friday; or email info@breastcheck.ie

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Murphy,
Chief Executive.

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