



To: National Screening Service
Kings Inn House,
200 Parnell Street,
Dublin 1.

Re: HPV Cervical Screening Literature Submission

Date: 14 December 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Irish Council for Human Rights strongly opposes the removal of the word "*woman*" in favour of "*people with cervixes*" in HPV cervical screening literature for the following reasons:

- Sex is an immutable characteristic, and it is an inescapable truth that one, therefore, cannot become a woman but rather one is born a woman;
- The only people who are born with a cervix are women, and any attempt to suggest otherwise does nothing but subvert language and reality;
- While not every woman has a cervix (for example due to surgery or Rokitansky syndrome), every person with a cervix is a woman;
- It has been a long road to attain equality for woman, and this misuse of language has real potential to undo much of the progress made to date;
- It is highly offensive to suggest that anyone can become a woman if they so choose, and in doing so the National Screening Service are trivialising what it means to be a woman;
- The word "*woman*" has always been understood to mean those that are born female;
- The removal of the word "*woman*" from cervical screening literature will make woman's health information harder to access and harder to understand, for example those from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be familiar with the word "*woman*" over "*people with cervixes*"; and those for whom English is not their first language are at risk of not attending screening arising from the confusion surrounding this misuse of language; and
- In circumstances where the National Screening Service succumbs to the pressure to subvert language in this way, this contributes to the devaluing of women and their sex-based entitlements, for example, single-sex changing rooms and toilet facilities, same-sex prisons and same-sex sports (which also gives rise to health and safety concerns).



IRISH COUNCIL
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We trust that you will give due consideration to the issues raised above and look forward to your reasoned response and conclusions.

Yours sincerely,

Tracey O'Mahony

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Director

Irish Council for Human Rights