# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Implementation of HPV testing by Cervical Screening Wales** |
| **DATE**  | **18 September 2018** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services** |

I am pleased to say that as of 17 September 2018 Cervical Screening Wales is providing high risk Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) testing as the primary cervical screening test across Wales. This is a more sensitive test and its use will prevent more cancers than current testing. It is also a more specific test which means that a negative result will be more reassuring. Wales will be the first of the UK nations to introduce this test for all screening participants.

The introduction of high risk HPV primary testing in Wales represents a completely new approach to cervical screening. There are over 100 different types of HPV, but only around 13 types are associated with cancer and these are known as 'high risk' types. The new test will look for the 13 known high risk HPV types, which cause 99.8% of cervical cancers. A woman’s immune system fights off most HPV infections naturally, but about 1 in 10 infections are harder to get rid of. Occasionally, HPV may start to damage cells and cause them to change which, if left untreated, can develop into cancer.

The new test will enable us to move from manual detection of abnormal cells to the identification of the cause of cervical cancer by detecting the infection via automated molecular testing. The test will deliver significantly better quality testing and improved patient experience. There will also be more appropriate referrals to colposcopy services, resulting in quicker treatment and women being discharged back to routine surveillance more quickly.

The current HPV vaccination programme protects against the two high risk HPV types that cause over 70% cervical cancer cases and some other types. As the HPV vaccine does not protect against all types of high risk HPV, regular cervical screening remains important. This combination of immunisation and cervical screening offers the best possible protection against cervical cancer and I would encourage all eligible women to take up the offer of screening when invited.