**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE NHS ENGLAND Breast Test and Training (TaT) service**

This background document explains:

* the current arrangements for the NHS Breast Screening Programme in England **(Section 1: Background)**
* the requirements and purpose of the future contract for Breast TaT **(Section 2: Current service model)**

1. **Section1: Background**

The Vaccination and Screening directorate (V&S) forms part of NHS England and exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. This is achieved through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships, and the delivery of specialist public health services.

V&S includes many programme areas, one of which is the NHS Breast Screening Programme (NHSBSP). The aim of the NHSBSP is to detect breast cancers at an early stage when treatment is more likely to be successful resulting in a reduction in mortality from breast cancer.

The screening programme consists of a clinical pathway via the providers (NHS and private) and this is quality assured by NHSE Screening Quality Assurance Service (SQAS), which sits within NHS England.

The role of the Screening Quality Assurance Service (SQAS) is to monitor the quality of local screening programmes and their compliance with guidance and standards. To do this, SQAS undertakes regional level quality assurance visits and pathway reviews as well as other QA activities such as review and monitoring of data, review and advice on screening safety incidents, oversight of the quality of service provider delivery via regular communications and participation in programme board meetings, etc. The Breast Test and Train (TaT) service supports the quality assurance work and provides NHSE with assurance of the ability of radiologists within the NHSBSP to accurately detect the range of cancers that they might be presented with in the population. It provides the means to enable radiologists to recognise a range of cancers, including those that are of a rarer condition which in turn, results in less harm to those undergoing mammograms as cancers will be correctly identified and appropriate treatment given. This supports the delivery of the NHSBSP objective of saving lives from breast cancer.

The TaT system is particularly helpful in improving performance in screening specificity. Targeted test sets are developed to help image readers to ensure that cases reported as “abnormal” are accurate, which results in reducing recall to assessment rates within the national Programme without decreasing the rate of cancer detection.

The Test and train service requires all radiologists to view a pre-selected range of mammograms, including those that indicate rare cancers. The images are chosen by the by Clinically experienced staff within the Test and Train service who source a suitable range of mammograms to develop each test set.

1. **Section 2: Current Service Model and Purpose of the Breast Test and Train programme**

The current Breast Test and Train service is a web based, quality assurance system, utilising bespoke Software. It tests image readers, within the screening programme, in their individual skill in identifying appropriate signs of breast cancer from a preselected set of radiographic images. It is mandatory for all image readers in the NHSBCSP to take part twice a year. Participation in the scheme is mandatory within the national service specification due to the realisable benefits to programme professionals reporting breast images. It allows new image readers and those returning following an absence from work to assess their capability in reporting breast images (malignant, benign and normal). This gives reassurance that the reader is competent and also tests their ability to accurately report breast examinations. It also serves as a refresher course for existing image readers and allows access to radiological images of rare and unusual breast lesions which they would not normally be exposed to which can help reduce the incidence of false positive and false negative diagnoses.

The current supplier provides, as part of the programme:

* Clinical input
* Communication with trusts to obtain a suitable range of cases
* IT platform for image readers to access the training

Following participation, a suite of reports and statistical analysis is available to the readers and others involved in the screening programme, to support and evidence the effectiveness of the scheme and programme professionals participating.

Approximately 750 individuals take part in the scheme on an annual basis.

Benefits of the scheme include:

* Ensures participants can identify and maintain competence and knowledge of rare and complex breast cancers
* Readers receive immediate feedback on their tests which allows them to rapidly assess their performance in comparison to peers and seek help if further input is required to achieve normative levels of performance

* Almost one fifth of current participants in the Breast TaT scheme are new to the programme. It is vital that they are tested to ensure their performance improves quickly and that they are exposed to a wide variety of abnormalities which could take years to observe in screening practice.

* Monitors Readers ability to identify an enriched sample of abnormalities and complex cases to identify poor performance and outliers

* Data can be examined on a national and regional basis to look at differences in performance between different screening centres and between different regions

* A participant’s data can be retrospectively analysed historically to examine whether they have problems in identifying key mammographic features

* Additional one on one support and recovery training can be provided to outliers and shared with NHSE to compare to real life performance