

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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AN ROINN
**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O
**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

Chief Executives of HSS Boards
Chief Executives of HSC Trusts – *for onward distribution to
lead directors for breast screening*
Directors of Public Health, HSS Boards – *for onward distribution
to public health leads for breast screening*
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts - *for onwards distribution to
Consultant Breast Radiologists, Breast Surgeons and
Breast Pathologists*
Directors of Nursing, HSS Boards
Directors of Nursing, HSS Trusts – *for onward distribution to
breast care nurses*
Regional Director of NI Breast Screening Programme – *for
onward distribution to Regional QA leads*
All GP Units – *for onward distribution to All General Practitioners*

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HSS(MD) 31/2008

Dear Colleague

AGE EXTENSION TO THE BREAST SCREENING PROGRAMME

Summary

Breast Screening for women aged between 50 and 64 years was introduced in Northern Ireland in 1989. The UK National Screening Committee has recommended that screening should be extended to include women aged 50-70 years. Health and Social Services Boards and Health and Social Care Trusts should make arrangements for the implementation of the age extension to the Northern Ireland Breast Screening Programme by March 2009.

Northern Ireland Breast Screening Programme

The Northern Ireland Breast Screening Programme which commenced in 1989 invites women aged 50-64 to attend for mammography screening every three years. Women aged 65 or over who wish to be screened can make an appointment through their local screening centre.

Age Extension of Breast Screening to Age 70

The UK National Screening Committee has recommended that breast screening should be extended to include women up to age 70. This policy change was endorsed by the DHSSPS in the Regional Cancer Framework – A Cancer Control Programme for Northern Ireland published in 2006. However because of recruitment difficulties and other capacity issues at that time it was acknowledged that age extension could not be implemented until these were resolved. RQIA in their Governance Review of the Northern Ireland Breast Screening Programme 2006 concurred with that view.

