

From the Chief Medical Officer  
Dr Michael McBride

HSS(MD) 26/2010

Chief Executive, Public Health Agency  
Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Board  
Director Public Health, Public Health Agency – *for onward distribution to public health screening leads*  
Chief Executives of HSC Trusts – *for onward distribution to Directors of Laboratory Services*  
Medical Directors of HSC Trusts – *for onward distribution to consultants in obstetrics and gynaecology*  
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency  
Directors of Nursing HSC Trusts for distribution to all midwives



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

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta  
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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Your Ref:  
Our Ref: HSS(MD) 26/2010  
Date: 15 July 2010

Dear Colleague

It has been brought to my attention that a serious incident has occurred in England in the Down's syndrome screening programme. There has been a failure to provide analysis and a Down's syndrome screening result for a number of pregnant women in the NHS East Midlands Region. This is due to the screening request card not being fully completed.

Because of the seriousness of this incident Dr Anne Mackie, Director of Screening Programmes, UK National Screening Committee, has requested that all SHAs, PCTs and Trusts in England provide assurances to her and themselves that the problem does not exist within their screening systems.

Although there is no Down's syndrome screening programme in Northern Ireland I am aware that HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland may offer Down's syndrome screening as part of maternity care and use laboratories in England to process the samples and provide results.

Trusts should assure themselves that all Down's syndrome screening samples taken and sent to laboratories have been appropriately analysed and reported on and that women have received their results.



It is important that all Trusts have failsafe systems in place to ensure that all results on screening tests are received and reported to women in a timely manner.

Yours sincerely



**DR M MCBRIDE**  
**Chief Medical Officer**

cc: Chief Nursing Officer  
Dr E Mitchell  
Dr M Boyle  
Dr H Livingston  
J McGeagh  
D Boulter

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