



Government
Office for Science



Department
of Health

Dear colleagues,

As you may be aware, the UK is at the forefront of the international response to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease in West Africa.

Through this letter we ask for your assistance in recruiting volunteers for three UK funded diagnostic laboratories in Sierra Leone.

The laboratories are essential in helping to speed up the time taken to identify, isolate and treat infected patients. They are funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), managed by Public Health England (PHE) and staffed by volunteers from PHE and other organisations. The laboratories provide critical support for the new UK Ebola Treatment Centres in Sierra Leone and are helping to stop the spread of Ebola across the country.

The first wave of volunteer laboratory staff is already operating at the Kerry Town Laboratory. However, further volunteers are required to staff the other two laboratories (in Port Loko and Makeni districts) and to provide adequate replacement of staff. We hope the UK scientific community within our universities and pharmaceutical industry will rise to this global challenge and volunteer the much needed technical expertise essential for fighting Ebola in Sierra Leone.

Further details on how to volunteer and the types of expertise required are provided overleaf.

Thank you for your consideration and support for this initiative. Please circulate within your networks and consider supporting those who are interested in volunteering.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Mark Walport
Government Chief Scientific Adviser

Dame Sally Davies
Chief Medical Officer

Volunteer to staff UK diagnostic laboratories

We urgently need more volunteers to give their expertise, time and commitment to help deliver the vital work of the diagnostics laboratories in Sierra Leone. In particular, there is a critical need to ensure sufficient volunteers over the Christmas and New Year period.

We are looking for the following capabilities for the laboratories:

- All levels of laboratory technicians and scientists, with bench experience in microbiology or virology, and competent at working in multidisciplinary teams;
- Experienced state registered biomedical scientists;
- Laboratory team leaders, with track record of laboratory management and organisational skills (who ideally would be a registered BMS or equivalent);
- General laboratory technicians and scientists are encouraged to volunteer.

Training and deployment

Volunteers will typically undergo a 2-3 week pre-deployment process which will include vetting of competencies, full laboratory training on all equipment and assays (1 week in the UK), and pre-travel vaccinations and medication such as for yellow fever and malaria. Volunteers will typically be deployed for a 4 to 6 week period to a UK funded PHE laboratory in Sierra Leone.

Each laboratory team has 16 members organised into two shifts of eight hours, covering a total of 16 hours a day. The shift pattern allows for regular days off for team members. Technical support and 24 hour help is available through the Rare & Imported Pathogens Laboratory (RIPL) at PHE Porton and RIPL technical staff.

An appropriate agreement will be put in place between volunteers and the deployment organisation, which will provide healthcare in country, accommodation, subsistence, transport and medical evacuation if required. The costs are being met by the DFID and parent organisations can recover the costs of backfilling posts for the duration of deployment from DFID.

How to volunteer

Volunteers should register their interest by email to ebola.deployment@phe.gov.uk. Potential volunteers will be sent an information pack and application form by PHE.