



UK Health
Security
Agency

Specialised microbiology and laboratories

Lab network and NHS liaison

Public Health Laboratory London

User Manual

Contents

Role of specialist microbiology and laboratories	4
Role of the Public Health Laboratory London.....	5
Key personnel and contact details	6
Key operations and laboratory personnel and contact details	7
PHL London location, working hours and out-of-hours service	7
NHS laboratories and access to public health testing in London	8
Definition of a public health microbiology specimen.....	9
Collection of specimens and associated request forms	10
Faecal specimens for culture and microscopy.....	11
Respiratory specimens for viral molecular testing (Respiratory PCR)	12
Avian influenza molecular testing of asymptomatic contacts (Avian influenza PCR).....	12
Urgent measles molecular testing (Measles PCR)	12
<i>Bordetella pertussis</i> molecular testing (<i>B. pertussis</i> PCR)	13
Throat/pharyngeal swabs for other pathogens	15
Serum specimens.....	15
Sputum specimens	15
Urine specimens.....	15
Specimen submission	16
Direct submission the laboratory	16
Submission to the laboratory via GP surgeries.....	16
Submission to the laboratory via other hospital pathology departments – DX.....	16
Submission to the laboratory via post.....	17
Submission to the laboratory using a courier.....	17
Investigation of local outbreaks	18
Food and Water Investigation	18
Test turnaround times	19
Results and laboratory reports	20
Appendix 1: Rejection of testing.....	21

Appendix 2: Request form for submission of public health gastrointestinal faeces specimens..... 22

Appendix 3: Request form for submission of public health non-gastrointestinal specimens..... 23

About the UK Health Security Agency 24

Role of specialist microbiology and laboratories

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) currently has a network of specialist microbiology laboratories across England. Each lead laboratory provides:

- microbiology support for the investigation, management, and control of communicable disease both during and out of routine working hours
- expert medical and scientific microbiological advice, including access to UKHSA experts locally and nationally as necessary
- a range of diagnostic, specialist, and reference tests
- assistance during field investigations by processing microbiology clinical specimens
- national standard methods and UKSHA testing algorithms
- surge capacity to deal with unanticipated outbreaks at short notice – UKHSA can also provide additional capacity for larger testing numbers and access to specific typing if required to define the epidemiology of outbreaks
- support for both regional and national capacity to respond to specific events of potential public health importance
- testing for look-back exercises for Health Protection Teams (HPTs), acute National Health Service (NHS) trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups (and successor organisations) and local authorities
- receipt, processing and reporting of laboratory results and epidemiological data in a timely and efficient manner and within specified turnaround times for diagnostic specialist and reference tests
- reports will be communicated electronically with standard interpretive comments
- senior clinical and scientific staff who will add specific interpretation and further advice relevant to individual patient needs or for public health significance.
- mechanisms for the proper handling, storage and security of all specimens and documentation always – this will be carried out in accordance with UKSHA guidelines, national guidelines and regulatory or legal requirement
- efficient and timely communications with public health organisations, both within the UKHSA (including HPTs) and externally, for example, local authorities and primary care health systems involved in communicable disease control
- assistance in maintaining an efficient communication network with all public health and NHS organisations including Hospital Infection Control Teams involved in communicable disease control
- all UKSHA diagnostic laboratories and the Food, Water and Environment (FW&E) are accredited with the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Role of the Public Health Laboratory London

Currently all public health microbiology tests for London are temporarily provided by the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) Cambridge. This is an interim measure during the UKHSA tender process for public health microbiology services for London.

PHL London uses the PHL Cambridge to provide a range of public health microbiology services for London. These include:

- a range of tests to investigate any event or outbreak of possible public health significance in the community or healthcare setting
- advice on the best diagnostic strategies to be adopted
- advice on interpretation of test results and additional investigations that may be helpful
- support to incident or outbreak investigation teams
- prompt communication of results in agreement with published turnaround times
- follow-up or clearance testing of patients or contacts of patients in whom organisms of public health importance are detected
- support for trusts, private hospitals, HPTs, prisons, care homes, schools or detention centres and other non-NHS institutions in the specialist investigation of healthcare-associated infection

These public health microbiology services are available to:

- Environmental Health Officers (EHOs)
- HPTs
- consultants in communicable disease control
- local authority staff and directors of public health
- integrated care systems
- NHS hospitals
- independent sector hospitals
- diagnostic laboratories
- hospital and community infection prevention and control teams
- primary care teams

The laboratory is linked to a network of specialised UKHSA Lab Network and Liaison laboratories across England (including laboratories testing food, water and environmental specimens) and 2 major reference units at UKHSA Colindale and UKHSA Porton.

This user manual describes the provision of, and access to, public health microbiology services for London and provides contact details for the services provided. It is also available on the [PHL London services internet page](#).

As of July 2017, PHL London no longer provides a diagnostic service for suspected MERS-CoV infection. Details of Investigation and Management of MERS-CoV cases can be found on the [MERS-CoV sections of the UKHSA website](#).

As of April 2021, PHL London no longer provides a CDRN service for *Clostridium difficile* Ribotyping and MLVA testing. Details of how to refer diagnostic specimens for CDRN service testing can be found on the [CDRN sections of the UKHSA website](#) or alternatively, the laboratory can be contacted: Telephone: 0113 392 7134.

London support and access to food, water and environmental microbiology services can be obtained from the [UKHSA FW&E laboratory at Colindale](#) (refer to page 20).

Key personnel and contact details

Members of the PHL London consultant team support HPTs, EHOs and NHS trusts according to geographical sectors of London (detailed below). In the event of a suspected outbreak or incident please contact the appropriate consultant so that suitable arrangements for investigation can be made. There is also a Duty Public Health Microbiologist available during the working day Monday to Friday and an on-call rota for out of hours' service.

Apart from specimens processed related to these incidents, the London PHL consultants provide formal and informal advice when on duty or covering their geographical patch. The PHL London consultants also provide support on national committees, provide input for guidance documents and offer expert advice in particular areas:

- Dr Albert Mifsud (Interim Clinical Lead Public Health Laboratory London)
South East London, South West London, North Central London
Respiratory infections
Chair of UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations
- Dr Bharat Patel
North West London
Healthcare associated infections, antimicrobial resistance, infection prevention and control
- Dr Rohini Manuel
North East London
Gastrointestinal infections and mycology
- Dr Caoimhe Nic Fhogartaigh (NHS Consultant Microbiologist providing support to PHL London)

Key operations and laboratory personnel and contact details

- Norah Easy
Interim Regional Head of Laboratory Operations for London, South East England and NMRS-South
Norah.Easy@ukhsa.gov.uk
- Dr Albert Mifsud
Interim Clinical Lead and Consultant Medical Microbiologist for Public Health Laboratory London
Albert.Mifsud@ukhsa.gov.uk

PHL London location, working hours and out-of-hours service

PHL London Administrative Office:

UKSHA

Public Health Laboratory London

Third Floor, Nobel House

17 Smith Square

London SW1P 3HX

Telephone: 0300 303 2429

Email: PHLLondon@ukhsa.gov.uk or PHE.phllondon@nhs.net

PHL London operates a single telephone number always: 0300 303 2429.

During working hours (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm), this number is staffed by the PHL London administrative team who will direct calls to the appropriate staff members. Out of hours (5pm to 9am), weekends and bank holidays, this number is staffed by the on-call PHL London consultant.

Please contact PHL London in advance of specimen submission, with details of the incident or outbreak and investigations required. Please include in the information the Incident or HPZone number if one has been assigned. Contact the on-call duty PHL London consultant for specific delivery arrangements out of hours.

NHS laboratories and access to public health testing in London

All NHS laboratories have responsibilities for health protection which includes providing support for the investigation of local outbreaks in their catchment area, through:

- contributing to the formulation of local contingency plans and participation in exercises
- detection of local outbreaks through monitoring laboratory findings
- detection and prompt reporting of unusual occurrences of public health significance
- providing initial laboratory support for outbreaks, incidents, and look-back exercises as appropriate
- attendance of appropriate staff at local community control of infection meetings and incident/outbreak control team meetings
- advice on appropriate investigations, interpretation of results and so on
- forwarding of appropriate specimens to reference laboratories

If specimens from patients suspected of being part of an outbreak are sent to a laboratory providing services for an NHS trust as part of their routine diagnostic workup, then this process should continue to minimise delay.

Following the declaration of an outbreak by a public health professional or local authority, PHL London should be contacted to decide upon the specimens required, testing methodology and mode of transport.

If the number of specimens arising from the outbreak is likely to exceed the capacity of the local laboratory or requires specialist test methodology, then this should be discussed with the relevant public health microbiologist.

Definition of a public health microbiology specimen

A public health microbiology specimen is usually submitted to determine the cause and extent of an outbreak in a defined community (institution, family group or the wider community) or to see whether an observed cluster of cases is related and constitutes an outbreak.

Specimens may also be submitted to detect spread and contain and/or prevent an outbreak (for example diphtheria and group A streptococcus).

Patient specimens may also be submitted for clearance purposes (faeces for *Escherichia coli* STEC O157) or to detect carriage of pathogens in asymptomatic individuals (*Salmonella typhi*).

Circumstances in which public health specimens may be submitted include:

- investigation of an outbreak (for example diarrhoea and vomiting in a nursing home or other institution in the community)
- suspected food poisoning in a group or community
- demonstrate carriage clearance of certain pathogens (see above) in individuals working in high risk situations (for example food handlers, those working with children or other vulnerable groups)
- screening of contacts of index cases (for example diphtheria, poliomyelitis)
- look-back exercises (for example carriage of blood borne viruses in a healthcare worker)
- cluster investigation (for example Legionnaires' disease, which could have a common source)

Such specimens are usually submitted at the request of:

- senior staff of a HPT
- EHOs
- director of public health
- consultant in communicable disease control
- director of hospital infection prevention and control or hospital infection control doctor

Collection of specimens and associated request forms

To provide the best quality results, it is essential that specimens are collected properly and at the appropriate time. It is also important that they are transported to the laboratory safely and without undue delay. All specimens must be transported in appropriate packaging. Please refer to Appendix 1 for guidance.

PHL London uses 2 request forms for public health specimens. The request forms are available as pdf documents and can be sent electronically. These are:

- Gastrointestinal Request Form (Appendix 2 – not for use)
- Non-Gastrointestinal Request Form (Appendix 3 – not for use)

Note that customised Gastrointestinal request forms have been created and provided to London EHOs and HPTs. EHOs and HPTs must ensure to use these customised request forms (PHL London can be contacted for the latest version of these request forms).

These request forms can be completed online or hand-written. Please provide full clinical details and brief details of the case and/or outbreak on the request form. In outbreak situations or when unusual pathogens may be implicated, it is essential to discuss the request with one of the PHL London consultants before submission of specimens.

Specimens must be accompanied by a properly completed request form. Please ensure that all details are completed on the request form and specimen container before it is provided to the patient or referred to the laboratory for testing. Both the request form and specimen container must be labelled with:

- patient's forename
- patients surname
- patient's date of birth
- date the specimen was taken

The request form must also clearly state:

- hospital number or NHS number
- case location
- incident or HPZone number (if applicable)
- requestor details (EHO, HPTs or diagnostic laboratory)

Inappropriate specimens, those that are inadequately labelled, damaged, or leaking and/or missing request forms will be rejected for testing. In instances of specimen rejection, an

electronic report will be issued stating that specimen testing has been rejected and will detail the reasons for rejection. Refer to Appendix 1 for guidance on rejection of testing.

Faecal specimens for culture and microscopy

PHL London provides laboratory investigation of faecal specimens, the most common specimens processed for public health purposes from cases of suspected food poisoning in the community. These may require an 'outbreak screen' or 'clearance testing'. Specimens may be submitted by London EHOs and HPTs. Specimens for the testing below should be referred to the PHL Cambridge.

Outbreak screen:

- *Salmonella sp.*
- *Shigella sp.*
- *Campylobacter sp.*
- *Escherichia coli* STEC O157 and NON-O157
- *Staphylococcus aureus*
- *Clostridium perfringens*
- *Bacillus cereus*
- Norovirus (PCR)
- Adenovirus (<5 years)
- Rotavirus (<5 years)
- *Cryptosporidium sp.*

Clearance testing:

- *Salmonella sp.*
- *Shigella sp.*
- *Escherichia coli* STEC O157 and NON-O157

Should you suspect any other pathogens, including any of the following, please discuss with the PHL London consultant or a member of PHL London scientific staff. Ensure to clearly indicate on the request form the clinical details and history, the tests requested and the reason for the request:

- *Giardia lamblia*
- *Entamoeba histolytica*
- *Vibrio cholera*
- Diarrhoeagenic *E. coli* (other than *E. coli* STEC O157)

- *Yersinia enterocolitica*
- Sapovirus
- Astrovirus
- *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*
- *Clostridium botulinum*

Please refer to the PHL London guidance document 'Public Health Laboratory London External Guidance: Postal Return of Faecal Samples' which has been provided to all London HPT and EHO teams (PHL London can be contacted for this guidance document and request form specified to your borough or HPT). Refer to Appendix 2 for example gastrointestinal request form (not for use).

Respiratory specimens for viral molecular testing (Respiratory PCR)

Outbreaks of viral respiratory tract infections may occur within institutions and require investigation to determine the etiological cause including Avian influenza. This assay is available to HPTs at PHL Cambridge on behalf of PHL London. Please refer to the PHL London guidance document 'PHL London Guidance and Instructions for Public Health Respiratory Testing within London' which has been provided to London HPTs. Ensure to use the PHL London Non-Gastrointestinal Request Form. PHL London can be contacted for this guidance document and request form. Refer to Appendix 3 for example request form (not for use).

Avian influenza molecular testing of asymptomatic contacts (Avian influenza PCR)

PHL London provides a molecular detection of Avian influenza viruses for asymptomatic contacts of infection for HPTs. This assay is available at PHL Cambridge on behalf of PHL London. Please refer to the PHL London guidance document 'PHL London Guidance and Instructions for Public Health Respiratory Testing within London' which has been provided to London HPTs. Ensure to use the PHL London Non-Gastrointestinal Request Form. PHL London can be contacted for this guidance document and request form. Refer to Appendix 3 for example request form (not for use).

Urgent measles molecular testing (Measles PCR)

PHL London provides an urgent molecular detection of Measles virus for HPTs. This assay is available at PHL Cambridge. Please refer to the PHL London guidance document 'PHL London Guidance and Instructions for Urgent for Public Health Measles Molecular Testing within

London' which has been provided to London HPTs. Ensure to use the PHL London Non-Gastro Request Form. PHL London can be contacted for this guidance document and request form. Refer to Appendix 3 for example request form (not for use).

Bordetella pertussis molecular testing (*B. pertussis* PCR)

PHL London provides a molecular detection of *B. pertussis* as a free of charge service. This assay is available at PHL Cambridge. If urgent testing is required for the public health management of hospitalised infants at the weekend, then this can be discussed with the on-call PHL London consultant.

Specimen type

B. pertussis resides in the posterior nares, which can only be reached by certain swab types. For PCR testing, please send:

- pernasal swabs 'dry' (with flexible wire shaft and rayon, Dacron or nylon bud) for which we are aware of 2 suppliers in the UK which are
 - Medical Wire: MW160 Dryswab™ Pernasal
 - Sterilin/Thermofisher – F168CA Twisted wire/Rayon (Blue cap) pernasal/nasopharyngeal
- nasopharyngeal swabs 'dry'
- Copan-style nasopharyngeal swab
- nasopharyngeal aspirate – not less than 400µl in a sterile container

Please refer to instructions on pernasal specimen collection for PCR testing on Page 14.

Timing of specimen collection and how to refer

- the closer to the date of onset of cough the specimen is collected, the greater the probability of detecting *B. pertussis*
- specimens for PCR should be taken <3 weeks post onset of cough – if ≥3 weeks, PCR can still be performed, but a negative result will not rule out *B. pertussis* infection
- ensure specimen is clearly labelled with patient forename, surname, date of birth, NHS number and date of specimen collection
- the date of specimen collection, date of onset of cough and interval post-onset of cough are important, so please include this information on the request form.

- refer specimen to local laboratory
- the local laboratory can refer the specimen to the PHL London using the PHL London Non-Gastrointestinal Request Form (PHL London can be contacted for this request form) – refer to Appendix 3, for example request form (not for use)
- if *B. pertussis* is detected by PCR, the specimen will be referred to the Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Reference Unit (RVPBRU), Colindale for surveillance testing (contact telephone number 020 8327 7887, email address rvpbruqueries@ukhsa.gov.uk)
- if *B. pertussis* is not detected by PCR, in adults and older children with a >2-week history of a cough, serological investigation may be warranted, please contact the Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Reference Unit (RVPBRU), Colindale
- antibiotic treatment, vaccination status and increasing age of patient can affect or decrease likelihood of detecting *B. pertussis*

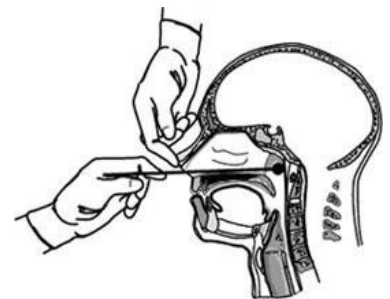
Pernasal specimen collection instructions for *B. pertussis* PCR testing

Personal protection during specimen collection

Minimise self-exposure by minimising the amount of time spent taking the specimen, wearing personal protection, and following infection control practices. Hands should be washed, and fresh gloves used for each patient.

Pernasal specimens:

1. Label the swab tube with the patient's first name, surname, date of birth, NHS number and date of specimen collection.
2. Gently insert the swab into one nostril straight back (not upwards) until it reaches the posterior wall. The distance from the nose to the ear gives an estimate of how far back the swab should be inserted. Do not force the swab. If an obstruction is encountered, try the other nostril.
3. Rotate the swab a few times, loosening the cells in the mucus cavity and then remove.
4. Place the swab back into the tube.
5. Complete the appropriate request form for your local laboratory.
6. Seal the specimen bag and refer to your local laboratory.



Throat/pharyngeal swabs for other pathogens

For detection of carriage of *Neisseria meningitidis*, the swab should be taken through the mouth (sweeping the posterior pharynx behind the uvula).

For detection of group A streptococci, swab the tonsillar area.

For detection of *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*, nose and throat swabs should be submitted. If infection with *C. diphtheriae* is suspected on clinical grounds, a public health microbiologist should be contacted without delay (that is without waiting for confirmation by culture). A single suspected case of diphtheria requires urgent public health action.

The PHL London consultant should be contacted for advice and discussion before submitting any specimens for the above pathogens.

Serum specimens

Specimens of clotted blood may be required for:

- investigation of clusters of atypical pneumonia
- look-back exercises to detect the transmission of blood borne viruses, by arrangement with laboratory, incident or outbreak management team

The PHL London consultant should be contacted for advice and discussion before submitting any serum specimens.

Sputum specimens

Please contact PHL London to discuss the submission of specimens should you need to submit sputum specimens to examine for the presence of mycobacteria (for example in cases of suspected tuberculosis).

Urine specimens

Please contact PHL London to discuss the submission of specimens should you need to submit a urine specimen or laboratory investigation of Legionnaires' disease.

Fresh urine specimens (in a sterile universal container) are required for the diagnosis of Legionnaires' disease in addition to a sputum or deep lung aspirate.

Specimen submission

Direct submission the laboratory

During the present interim period, public health microbiology diagnostic services for London are being provided by PHL Cambridge. Please send specimens directly to this laboratory using the following address:

Public Health Laboratory (PHL) Cambridge

Addenbrooke's Hospital
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Clinical Microbiology and Public Health Laboratory
UKHSA, Level 6, Box 236
Cambridge CB2 0QQ

For other specimens and/or tests, please contact PHL London and discuss prior to submission.

It is the responsibility of the service user to ensure samples reach the laboratory.

Submission to the laboratory via GP surgeries

As public health microbiology for London is temporarily relocated to PHL Cambridge, it is not possible for local authorities to submit specimens via local General Practitioners (GP) surgeries.

Submission to the laboratory via other hospital pathology departments – DX

The DX system may be used for submission of public health microbiology specimens for London to the PHL Cambridge from alternative sites using the DX system. Please note that the DX number (DX6640601) for all public health microbiology specimens referred to the PHL London will remain unchanged but the exchange for delivery will be Cambridge 90CB.

Submission to the laboratory via post

Any specimens sent by post must comply with the [regulations for the Transport of Infectious Substances](#).

PHL London operates a Faecal Postal Return Kit system for EHOs and HPTs which enables its users to submit non-urgent faecal specimens for testing via the post.

Please refer to the PHL London guidance document 'Public Health Laboratory London External Guidance: Postal Return of Faecal Samples' which has been provided to all London HPT and EHO teams (PHL London can be contacted for this guidance document).

If you require stocks of Faecal Postal Return kits these can be arranged by contacting the PHL London administration team by telephone on 0300 303 2429 or by email PHLLondon@ukhsa.gov.uk.

The London HPTs operate a postal return of specimens for Avian influenza testing of asymptomatic contacts. Please refer to the PHL London guidance document 'PHL London Guidance and Instructions for Public Health Respiratory Testing within London' which has been provided to London HPTs (PHL London can be contacted for this guidance document).

Postage costs

All HPTs and EHOs are encouraged to use the pre-paid Faecal Postal Return system and all HPTs to use the Avian influenza asymptomatic contacts pre-paid Postal Return system. Postage costs for other specimen types must be paid for by the requestor.

Submission to the laboratory using a courier

HPTs are to use their own courier account notably for Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) and measles incidents. Other requestors are encouraged to contact their HPTs if they deem testing is of public health importance.

Investigation of local outbreaks

EHOs, HPTs and GPs can continue to refer specimens for investigation of individual cases of infection and small community outbreaks using their local NHS laboratories if this has been their normal practice.

If an outbreak control team is convened by the HPT and specimen numbers exceed or are likely to exceed the capacity of the PHL Cambridge, this should be discussed with the public health microbiologist leading the investigation and a mechanism for the continued investigation of the outbreak will then be agreed by the outbreak control team.

As soon as an outbreak is recognised (of whatever size) the HPT will assign an incident or HPZone number, and this should be used to identify specimens associated with the outbreak or incident.

If an outbreak is identified initially by a local authority or HPT, the outbreak specimens should be referred to PHL London under an incident or HPZone number if one has been allocated.

Food and Water Investigation

If a food or water source is implicated then advice on sampling and specimen submission should be sought from a Food Examiner at the Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Laboratory Colindale. UKHSA operates a courier system for the collection and transport of FWEM specimens to the laboratory at Colindale.

The contact details of the Colindale laboratory are:

Food Water and Environmental Microbiology Laboratory London
UKHSA Colindale
61 Colindale Avenue
London NW9 5EQ
Telephone: 020 8327 658 / 6550 / 6551
Email: fwem@ukhsa.gov.uk

Unit head: Sandra Lai sandra.lai@ukhsa.gov.uk

Test turnaround times

Information on tests performed and approximate turn-around times (TATs) can be obtained by contacting PHL London or please refer to the PHL Cambridge [Specialist Microbiology Network East of England Public Health Microbiology User Handbook](#).

Please also note the following information for more urgent testing:

- TAT refers to the time between receipt of sample at PHL Cambridge to verification of laboratory result and issue of a PDF laboratory report to PHL London

Respiratory PCR:

- performed 7 days per week
- Monday to Friday (2 runs per day), sample receipt cut-off time 9am for same-day results and 2pm for next-day results
- Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays (one run per day) sample receipt cut-off time 12noon for next-day results

Avian flu PCR (non-urgent asymptomatic and urgent symptomatic):

- performed 7 days per week
- run on demand (no cut-off time)
- performed between 9am and 4pm

Measles PCR:

- performed 7 days per week
- one run per day
- sample receipt cut-off time 9am for same-day results

For communication on high priority specimens or any concerns during regular working hours, please contact a member of the PHL London team by telephone on 0300 303 2429 or email PHLLondon@ukhsa.gov.uk.

Results and laboratory reports

Electronic PDF laboratory reports are shared Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm (not at weekends or Bank Holidays).

Out of hours (5pm to 9am), weekends and Bank Holidays, please liaise with the PHL London duty consultant for results 0300 303 2429.

In the case of EHO service users the iGateway system will be used to securely transmit electronic PDF laboratory reports. All EHOs should have access to iGateway, if you are unsure or require confirmation please contact the PHL London team by telephone on 0300 303 2429 or email PHLLondon@ukhsa.gov.uk who keep records of all active users.

HPT service users will receive electronic PDF laboratory reports via secure ukhsa.gov.uk email. HPTs can also access their respective EHO borough iGateway system accounts.

Should you require training on iGateway please contact PHL London who will put you in contact with the relevant staff within UKHSA.

NHS trusts and other healthcare providers may receive electronic PDF laboratory reports securely via the NHS.net email system or via Egress Switch Secure email.

It is the responsibility of the service user to track and ensure delivery of specimens to the laboratory. If you need to contact PHL London regarding pending results, please first ensure you have confirmation that samples have arrived at the laboratory (courier tracking or Royal Mail 24-hour tracking).

Appendix 1: Rejection of testing

Prior to transport to the laboratory specimens must be packaged correctly. Biological substances classified as UN3373 should be packaged and transported in line with packaging instruction P650 of the [Accord Dangerous Routier Regulations](#).

The individual requesting or taking specimens from patients known to be infectious must ensure that both the form and specimen container are appropriately labelled. If submitting multiple specimens within the same package, each must be separated by a clear plastic self-sealing bag with the request form stored separately from the specimen.


A laboratory will automatically reject PHL London specimens where they are received inadequately labelled, missing a completed request form and/or where there is mismatch between details on specimen and request form.

This is in accordance with the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH) guidelines, the international ISO 15189 standard and the laboratory standard operating procedure (SOP) which defines the minimum criteria required for the receipt and identification of specimens (there is separate criteria for the labelling of specimens, completion of a request form and matching of patient details on specimen and request form).

All specimens, including those rejected are kept for a minimum period of time by the laboratory after a report is issued according to the laboratory SOP (6 days for stool specimens and 7 days for respiratory specimens).

Appendix 2: Request form for submission of public health gastrointestinal faeces specimens

Do not use, contact PHL London for copy to use.



**UK Health
Security
Agency**

Request Form

Public Health Laboratory London

Gastrointestinal Samples

Requestor: *London Borough / HPT Name XXX*

Deliver specimen to:
 Addenbrooke's Hospital,
 Cambridge University Hospitals
 NHS Foundation Trust,
 Clinical Microbiology & Public Health
 Lab, UKHSA, Level 6,
 Box 236, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ.
 Telephone: 0300 303 2429

EHO TO PLACE PHL London TRACKING BARCODE sticker HERE
(EHO to also log this number):

EHO TO WRITE ROYAL MAIL ENVELOPE TRACKING CODE HERE
(EHO to also log this code):

Note: SAMPLES WILL BE REJECTED AND TESTING WILL NOT BE PERFORMED
where samples are inadequately labelled and/or missing or incomplete request forms.

Sender's Information	
Investigating Officer: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	Incident/HPZone Number: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>
Telephone: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	EHO/Council Reference Number: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>
Secure email: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	

Patient Details	
Surname: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Address: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
First name: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Postcode: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>
Date of Birth: <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> / <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> / <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/>	
Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	
NHS Number: <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>	

Date and time of sample collection <small>(patient to complete)</small>	Date and time of onset of symptoms
<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> / <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> / <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> Time: <input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> / <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> / <input style="width: 20%;" type="text"/> Time: <input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/>


Clinical Details	Case Details	Investigations Required
<input type="checkbox"/> Recent travel <input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhoea <input type="checkbox"/> Fever <input type="checkbox"/> Vomiting <input type="checkbox"/> Blood in stools	<input type="checkbox"/> New case <input type="checkbox"/> Contact <input type="checkbox"/> Possible outbreak <input type="checkbox"/> Clearance	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbreak Screen <small>(routine culture, Crypto, food poisoning, toxins, and viruses)</small> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Salmonella</i> clearance only <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Shigella</i> clearance only <input type="checkbox"/> <i>E. coli</i> O157 clearance only <input type="checkbox"/> Norovirus only <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please comment in the box below)

Comments and / or further information

Request Form: Public Health Gastrointestinal Samples	Author	Michelle Cairns	Authoriser	Julie Johnson
Version 4	Date of Issue	April 2022	Date of Review	April 2024

Appendix 3: Request form for submission of public health non-gastrointestinal specimens

Do not use, contact PHL London for copy to use.



**UK Health
Security
Agency**

Request Form

Public Health Laboratory London
Non – Gastrointestinal Samples

For London HPTs and Diagnostic Laboratories

Deliver specimen to:
Addenbrooke's Hospital,
Cambridge University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust,
Clinical Microbiology & Public Health Lab,
UKHSA, Level 6, Box 236,
Cambridge, CB2 0DQ.
Telephone: 0300 303 2429

IF ROYAL MAIL IS USED, HPT TO WRITE ENVELOPE TRACKING CODE HERE (HPT to also log this code and track delivery):

Note: SAMPLES WILL BE REJECTED AND TESTING WILL NOT BE PERFORMED where samples are inadequately labelled and/or missing or incomplete request forms.

Sender's Information	
<input type="checkbox"/> South London HPT <input type="checkbox"/> North West London HPT <input type="checkbox"/> North East North Central London HPT <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnostic Lab (specify): 	Requestor Name: Telephone Number: Email Address: HPZone Number: Diagnostic Lab Postcode:

Patient Details	
Surname: 	Symptoms:
First Name: 	<input type="checkbox"/> Sporadic <input type="checkbox"/> Possible Outbreak <input type="checkbox"/> Contact
Date of Birth: / / 	
Sex: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): 	Recent Travel:
NHS Number: 	

Specimen Information			
<input type="checkbox"/> Nasopharyngeal Swab	<input type="checkbox"/> Sputum	<input type="checkbox"/> Blood	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please detail):
<input type="checkbox"/> Nasopharyngeal Aspirate	<input type="checkbox"/> BAL	<input type="checkbox"/> Serum	
<input type="checkbox"/> Throat Swab	<input type="checkbox"/> Pemasal Swab	<input type="checkbox"/> Oral Fluid Swab	
Sample Date: / / 	Time: 	Specimen Reference: 	

Laboratory Investigations Required	
<input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory <i>Bordetella pertussis</i> PCR	<input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory PCR Screen (HPTs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory Measles PCR (HPTs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) (HPTs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory Avian influenza PCR (HPTs / testing asymptomatic contacts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please detail):

Comments and / or further information

Request Form: PHL London: Non-Gastrointestinal Samples	Author	Michele Cairns	Authoriser	Jonathan Turner
Version 5	Page 1 of 1	Date of Issue	August 2022	Date of Review
				August 2024

About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear incidents, and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific, and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

[UKHSA](#) is an executive agency, sponsored by the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).

© Crown copyright 2022

Published: February 2023

Publishing reference: GOV-14141

OGL

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit [OGL](#). Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.



UKHSA supports the UN
Sustainable Development Goals

**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**