



UK Health
Security
Agency

UK Health Security Agency Public Health Microbiology Division

Bacteriology Reference Department (BRD) user manual

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Contents

Foreword.....	5
The Bacteriology Reference Department (BRD)	5
Disclaimer.....	6
Amendment history.....	6
Key personnel and contact details.....	7
BRD staff contact details	8
How to obtain services.....	10
Establishment of service agreement.....	10
Hours of service	10
Services available.....	10
Specimen submission guidelines	10
Request forms	11
Specimen quarantine policy	12
Requests for additional tests	12
Requests for sharing data or isolates	12
Urgent specimens.....	13
Forensic and medico-legal specimens	13
Specimen transportation	13
Turnaround times.....	14
Reports	14
Policy on emailing reports	14
Quality assurance in BRD	14
Referral site accreditation information	14
Contact for general quality-related enquiries	15
Complaints	16
UKHSA Colindale: recognition of Caldicott recommendations	16
Compliance with the Human Tissue Act.....	16
A to Z listing of services available	18
The Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infections (AMRHAi) reference unit.....	26
Bacterial identification service (BIDS).....	26
Isolate identification.....	26

Atypical and rarely isolated strains	26
Bacterial taxa that are difficult to identify to the species level.....	27
Aerobic actinomycetes	27
Clinical sample identification	27
Opportunistic pathogens section.....	28
Molecular (DNA-based) typing	29
Staphylococcus and Streptococcus Reference Section (SSRS).....	30
Staphylococcus species	30
Lancefield group A streptococci (GAS), <i>streptococcus pyogenes</i>	32
Lancefield Group B Streptococci (GBS), <i>Streptococcus agalactiae</i>	32
Lancefield group C and group G streptococci	33
Identification of streptococci and related genera	34
Antimicrobial Resistance and Mechanisms Service.....	34
Confirmation of unusual resistances.....	34
Therapeutic guidance	43
Endocarditis and <i>Pseudomonas</i> spp. from CF patients.....	43
Molecular investigation of resistance.....	43
New antibiotics	44
New diagnostics	44
Surveys of resistance	44
Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit (GBRU)	46
Bacillus, Clostridia and Listeria	46
Campylobacter and Helicobacter	50
<i>Escherichia coli</i> , shigella, vibrio, yersinia	52
Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Reference Unit (RVPBRU).....	54
Zoonotic and Acute Respiratory Section (ZARS)	54
Legionella.....	54
Mycoplasma and ureaplasma.....	56
Respiratory chlamydiae	58
Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Section (VPBS)	59
<i>Bordetella pertussis</i> and <i>Bordetella</i> spp.	59
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i> identification and capsular typing of pneumococci	59
Identification and toxigenicity testing of <i>Corynebacterium diphtheriae</i> and other potentially toxigenic corynebacteria.....	60

<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>	62
Diphtheria immunity	63
Tetanus immunity	63
Sexually Transmitted Infections Reference Laboratory (STIRL)	64
Referral of putative <i>N. gonorrhoeae</i> cultures	64
<i>Mycoplasma genitalium</i>	65
<i>Lymphogranuloma venereum</i> (LGV)	66
<i>Treponema pallidum</i> (syphilis)	66
<i>Haemophilus ducreyi</i> (Chancroid)	68
Medico-legal processing: <i>M. genitalium</i> , LGV and syphilis samples	69
New antibiotics and diagnostics	69
About the UK Health Security Agency	701

Foreword

The Bacteriology Reference Department (BRD)

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), BRD is a national and international reference department for a wide range of bacterial infections.

BRD has 3 designated World Health Organization Collaborating Centres (WHO CCs) – the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infections; WHO Collaborating Centre for Haemophilus influenzae and Streptococcus pneumoniae; and WHO Collaborating Centre for Diphtheria and Streptococcal Infections. BRD is made up of following units:

The Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare-Associated Infections (AMRHAI) reference unit

AMRHAI is the national reference laboratory for investigation of antibiotic resistance in, and characterisation of, healthcare associated pathogens. The unit seeks to define outbreaks and identify transmission pathways using established and developmental phenotypic and genotypic methods to type isolates, to identify biomarkers associated with virulence, fitness', host specificity and transmissibility and determine susceptibility for most species of bacteria, with the notable exception of category 3 organisms, detect new and emerging resistances by interpretive analysis of minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) profiles and molecular investigation, and provide therapeutic guidance. The unit also undertakes laboratory-based surveillance, advises on outbreak investigations and investigation of unusual antibiotic resistance, and on any public health risk and provides an identification service for difficult-to-identify bacteria and from culture-negative clinical samples. It gives information and advice on infection control issues, the investigation of healthcare- and community-associated infections, and aspects of laboratory safety and other related matters.

The Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit (GBRU)

GBRU works at local, regional, national and international levels to reduce the burden of gastrointestinal infection. Activities include national microbiological reference services for a range of gastrointestinal pathogens as well as the provision of specialist testing for the microbiological examination of clinical, food, water and environmental samples. The unit also undertakes research into the genetic diversity of pathogens and the development of improved detection and characterisation techniques for food, water and environmentally borne diseases. GBRU is able to offer expert advice, education and training on public health aspects of food microbiology and safety.

The Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Reference Unit (RVPBRU)

RVPBRU provides national and international reference services for a number of bacteria causing respiratory, systemic and vaccine-preventable bacterial infections. RVPBRU receives bacterial isolates and clinical samples which are analysed by a wide range of methodologies in accordance with customer needs. RVPBRU also performs surveillance and advises on incident and outbreak investigation.

The Sexually Transmitted Infections Reference Laboratory (STIRL)

STIRL provides specialist and reference services to detect, investigate and characterise clinically important STI pathogens. The laboratory uses established and developmental phenotypic and genotypic assays to define antimicrobial susceptibility of bacterial STIs to relevant antimicrobials for individual case management, as well as for surveillance purposes. In addition, we seek to define and investigate outbreaks and diagnostic escape mutants, as well as offering diagnostic, scientific and clinical advice on STI infections.

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Amendment history

Version number	Date	Sections affected	Pages affected
17	November 2024	Updated A to Z listing and staff list.	All
18	May 2026	Black ink only on request forms, Update table. N. gonorrhoeae, spectinomycin withdrawn, new congenital syphilis service, enhanced surveillance form eNOIDs. SSRS typing and PFGE replaced by WGS. botulinum neurotoxins falls outside the scope of ISO 17025 and ISO 15189, Campylobacter antimicrobial sensitivity E-test withdrawn. add page 14 - WGS and Sequencing service (TPS71).	All

Key personnel and contact details

Name	Designation	Email	Telephone
Tamyo Mbisa	Deputy Director, Public Health Reference Microbiology	tamyo.mbisa@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7828
Hemanti Patel	Head of Laboratory Scientific Services	hemanti.patel@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7705
Gillian Hewlett	Head of Business and Commercial Services	gillian.hewlett@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 3836 0604

Scientific staff are available for the respective BRD Units below for advice in the first instance on any scientific queries and if required arrangements will be made for a Clinical Medical Microbiologist to assist on any medical advice. See below for BRD staff contact list.

BRD Units	Email
Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infections (ARMHAI)	amrhai@ukhsa.gov.uk
Gastrointestinal Bacterial Infections (GBRU)	gbru@ukhsa.gov.uk
Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacterial Infections (RVPBRU)	rvpbruqueries@ukhsa.gov.uk
Sexually Transmitted Infections Reference Lab (STIRL)	stilab@ukhsa.gov.uk

UKHSA Public Health Microbiology switchboard: 020 8200 4400

BRD General Office: 020 83277887 staffed 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Email: vrqueries@ukhsa.gov.uk

DX address

UKHSA Colindale Bacteriology
DX 6530002

Postal address

UK Health Security Agency
Bacteriology Reference Department
61 Colindale Avenue
London NW9 5EQ

BRD staff contact details

Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infections

Antimicrobial Resistance and Mechanisms Service			
Katie Hopkins	Section Head	katie.hopkins@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7061
Staphylococcus and Streptococcus Reference Section			
Kartyk Moganeradj	Section Head	kartyk.moganeradj@ukhsa.gov.uk	02821335174
Opportunistic pathogens typing			
Michaela Day	Section Head	michaela.day@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 83277133
Bacterial identification, culture negative clinical specimens (16S)			
Julie Logan	Section Head	julie.logan@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6059
Caroline Motamed	Technical Manager	caroline.motamed@ukhsa.gov.uk	

Gastrointestinal Bacterial Infections

<i>E. coli</i> , shigella, vibrio, yersinia			
Claire Jenkins	Pathogen Lead	claire.jenkins@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6035
Salmonella			
Marie Chattaway	Pathogen Lead	marie.chattaway@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6171
Bacillus, clostridia (<i>C. perfringens</i> , <i>C. botulinum</i> , <i>C. tetani</i>), listeria			
Dunstan Rajendram	Pathogen Lead	Dunstan.Rajendram@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6739
Campylobacter, helicobacter			
Craig Swift	Pathogen Lead	craig.swift@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6597
Michael Wright	Technical Manager	Michael.wright@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6136

Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacterial Infections

Bordetella, diphtheria, Haemophilus, pneumococci, Tetanus ab			
David Litt	Section Head	david.litt@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7476
Legionella, mycoplasma, ureaplasmas, respiratory Chlamydia			
Baharak Afshar	Section Head	baharak.afshar@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6495
Nita Doshi	Technical Manager	nita.doshi@ukhsa.gov.uk	

Sexually Transmitted Infections Reference Lab

Sarah Alexander	Unit Head	sarah.alexander@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7231
Paola Barbero	Technical Manager	paola.barbero@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7674
Reference Services			
Rachel Pitt-Kendall	Section Head	rachel.pittkendall@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7339

Quality (general enquires, compliance and complaints)

Ifeoma Ekwueme	Quality Implementation and Compliance Manager	ifeome.ekwueme@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 7552
Nazim Chowdhury	Quality Manager	nazim.chowdhury@ukhsa.gov.uk	020 8327 6642

How to obtain services

Establishment of service agreement

Each request accepted by the laboratory for examination is considered to be an agreement for work under [UKHSA terms and conditions for the supply of goods and/or services](#). Specific requests for service level agreements or contracts should be made to business@ukhsa.gov.uk

Hours of service

The Department is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Telephone enquiries via the BRD general office are available from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. No routine services are available outside these hours. The Department is closed on public holidays.

Services available

BRD does not offer diagnostic services to members of the public except via a registered medical practitioner. Results can only be issued to the requesting physician or medical unit and will not be given to patients directly under any circumstances. We reserve the right to check the authenticity of callers to protect the confidentiality of patients' personal data.

There are no clinical facilities at UKHSA Colindale, and we are unable to see patients or give telephone medical advice directly to members of the public.

The department undertakes tests as listed in the [A to Z table](#). The main factors affecting individual tests are noted against the relevant test, including minimum sample volumes where relevant. Further information is available from:

- [Services: detailed information](#)
- [Infectious diseases: detailed information](#)

Specimen submission guidelines

Specimens

All clinical specimens must be labelled with at least 2 of the following unique identifiers:

- surname or forename or another unique patient identifier, and/or
- date of birth
- sender's sample number

All clinical and environmental specimens submitted from the same patient or source must be labelled with a unique specimen identifier or sender's sample number.

The time taken to perform bacterial identification, typing and susceptibility testing is dependent on the receipt of pure cultures. Cultures that require purification or that cannot be retrieved because they are no longer viable may increase turnaround time significantly or require repeat submission.

For serological tests, separated serum is preferred. Samples which are highly haemolysed or hyperlipaemic should not be sent as lysed blood or heavily blood-stained samples can interfere with serological testing. Heat-inactivated samples may give rise to erroneous results in several assays and should not be sent. Please contact the relevant unit prior to sending the specimen if no other sample is available.

Request forms

Please use the current versions of request forms where possible and complete all relevant sections. [BRD request forms](#) are available on the website. Refer to the [A to Z table](#) below. Pre-addressed and bar-coded request forms to ensure reports are dispatched to the appropriate address are available on request.

Request forms must match and include the above information on the sample, as well as:

- name and contact information of requester (vital for urgent requests)
- tests required
- specimen type and site
- hazard group (if known) or suspected to be Category 3
- sender's sample number
- consultant or GP name (if applicable)
- date of sample
- sex
- relevant clinical information
- date of onset
- vaccination history (if relevant to test requested)
- NHS number
- appropriate travel history in previous 4 weeks

Please complete the forms in only black ink.

Requests for work on isolates that presumptively fall into ACDP Hazard Group 3 must be clearly marked to show the findings of the sending laboratory.

Specimen quarantine policy

Failure to comply with our specimen submission guidelines and the following quarantine policy may lead to specimen rejection and/or delay of reports.

Please complete request forms as fully as possible. Failure to do so may result in delays or rejection. Some specimens may be rejected if lack of information could expose staff to 'high risk' pathogens at the incorrect containment level. Requests for work on isolates that presumptively fall into ACDP Hazard Group 3 must be clearly marked to show the findings of the sending laboratory. See [specimen submission guidelines](#) for more details.

If a specimen is submitted to BRD for an investigation that we do not offer we will contact the customer and return, forward or archive the sample and issue a report to the sender explaining the reasons for the sample's rejection. The sample will be returned if requested (within mainland UK) or discarded after 14 days.

Requests for additional tests

All samples sent in for testing in BRD must be accompanied by a completed request form in the first instance. If additional laboratory testing is required on a sample previously submitted to BRD, please contact the relevant unit directly. Original specimens are normally retained for at least one month, but further testing may not be possible due to sample volume constraints, specimen viability or other factors. The unit will be able to advise on the feasibility of using the original specimen for analysis.

Units may, at their own discretion, accept oral (verbal) requests for additional testing for samples already received. Written confirmation of your request must be sent to the unit prior to the release of results and should be received within 48 hours of the verbal request. Written confirmation may be sent via email (by attaching a scanned request form) or in the post. Email communications should be between the same domains to ensure security of information.

Requests for additional testing must only be made via a registered medical practitioner or HCPC registered biomedical or clinical scientist. Please note there are no fax facilities at UKHSA Colindale.

Requests for sharing data or isolates

Commonly requested strains are submitted to the Cultures Collection (CC) by UKHSA. BRD requires a material transfer agreement for shared data or strains. A charge will be levied unless a prior collaborative UKHSA project is agreed and in place. Please contact the relevant unit.

Urgent specimens

If a reference service is required urgently, please contact a senior staff from the relevant unit to discuss prior to dispatch and give patient and sample details, details of courier and expected time of arrival. Always mark 'urgent' clearly on the request form.

Forensic and medico-legal specimens

The department has capabilities to test medico-legal specimens and certain types of forensic specimens. However, whilst the assays performed are accredited under ISO15189:2022 for diagnostic purposes, the department is not accredited for performing these tests for forensic work where the results of the sample will go into the criminal justice system.

Due to the legal requirements pertaining to these types of specimens, they will only be processed if the department has been contacted in advance and if all paperwork (including the chain of evidence form) is correctly completed. This will enable the department to ensure continuity of evidence throughout testing.

All requests for forensic tests must be discussed with the relevant units prior to sending the specimen to the laboratory.

Specimen transportation

Specimens sent by post or by courier must be in a sealed container, surrounded by sufficient absorbent packing material to take up any leakage in the event of damage during transit, sealed in a plastic bag and placed in an approved outer container which meets current postal or other transport regulations. Any organisation sending out cultures or diagnostic specimens has a legal duty to ensure that such items are sent in a safe manner.

UKHSA follows the Guidance on regulations for the transport of infectious substances, 2023-2024, published by the WHO. Specimens sent to BRD laboratories must meet the criteria in these guidelines. Samples which are not packaged appropriately may not be processed.

Arrangements must be made by referring laboratories to ensure that time and temperature requirements (detailed under 'Main factors affecting tests', below) for sample transportation are maintained. Failure to achieve this may compromise sample integrity and the validity of test results. Samples which do not meet the sample acceptance criteria may not be processed.

Samples which are dispatched at ambient temperature (10°C to 25°C) must have a transit time of no more than 72 hours. If the date of receipt is greater than 72 hours from the date of dispatch, the referring laboratory will be informed, and the specimens may not be processed.

Turnaround times

Turnaround times (TAT) are from day of receipt to issue of reports in calendar days. The times shown are the typical TATs achieved by the laboratory but may be longer or shorter depending on the availability of staff and the complexity of the investigation. BRD staff are committed to the fastest possible issue of reports, consistent with accuracy, on the specimens they examine. TATs may vary during seasonal outbreaks; testing may be conducted more frequently during epidemic seasons. We seek to process at least 80% of specimens received within the published TATs.

Reports

Reports will be delivered electronically via E-lab or will be printed and delivered by post if the referring laboratory is not registered to E-lab. For details on how to register for E-lab and further information, please email LimsHelpdesk@ukhsa.gov.uk

Please note reports will only be sent to the requestor named on the request form.

Policy on emailing reports

The following guidelines have been prepared having taken into account the code of practice on reporting patients' results by email prepared by the Department of Health and Caldicott recommendations.

1. It is Reference Laboratories Colindale policy that reports containing patients' data should not be sent by email.
2. Emails cannot be relied on to guarantee security of patients' data because they can be intercepted by a third party en route.
3. Reports cannot be sent by fax: there are no fax facilities at UKHSA Colindale.

Quality assurance in BRD

Referral site accreditation information

We receive many requests regarding the accreditation status of BRD. The department is accredited to ISO 15189:2022 and 17025:2017.

General information about our accreditation (including copies of certificates) and ISO 17025:2017. See [Quality at the laboratories of the UK Health Security Agency, Colindale](#).

List of accredited services

See the [schedule of accreditation on the United Kingdom Accreditation Service \(UKAS\) website](#). BRD is a UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited medical laboratory number 8197. For the most up-to-date information linked to services offered, contact the Quality Assurance Manager as indicated below. Lists of workflows with corresponding accreditation status are available upon request on a confidential basis.

External quality assurance and proficiency testing

All BRD laboratories participate in these where available and appropriate for the examination and interpretation of examination results. Any issues with EQA performance that could affect any of the services provided are communicated directly to service users where relevant.

Service updates

Users will be informed in a timely manner of any delays beyond the published turnaround times where these could compromise patient care.

Issue of revised reports

Any amendments to original reports will be highlighted to users.

Authorisation of reports

Staff authorising reports are competency assessed, and, additionally, medical staff undergo revalidation to meet the professional standards set by the GMC.

The quality of our systems is also checked by our IQA schemes, which require selection of referred samples for 'blinded' testing at a later date. After processing, the results for IQA samples are unblinded and are assessed against the results originally reported to the sending laboratory. Any discrepancies are fully investigated as to their root cause before any remedial action is implemented. Results of our EQA and IQA performance are discussed at Management Review and Unit meetings as appropriate.

Contact for general quality-related enquiries

Quality Assurance Manager: Nazim Chowdhury,
Telephone 020 8327 6642
Email: nazim.chowdhury@ukhsa.gov.uk

Complaints

If there is a problem, or you are not satisfied with the service you have received, in the first instance contact the appropriate unit or section head, contact details. Otherwise contact:

Quality Implementation and Compliance Manager: Ifeoma Ekwueme

Telephone: 20 8327 7552

Email : ifeoma.ekwueme@ukhsa.gov.uk

Complaints will be responded to within 5 working days of receipt and if resolution cannot be achieved within 20 days, the complainant will be notified. Our endeavour is to be responsive to the changing needs of all users of our services. We welcome comments on how we can improve the provision of these services. Please contact the department if you have any queries.

UKHSA Colindale: recognition of Caldicott recommendations

The recommendations of the Caldicott Report (1997) and the subsequent Information Governance Review (2013) have been adopted by UKHSA and by the National Health Service as a whole. These recommendations relate to the security of patient identifying data (PID) and the uses to which they are put. UKHSA observes Caldicott guidance in handling PID and has appointed its own Caldicott Guardian. All enquiries about the security and use of PID at Public Health Microbiology Colindale should be addressed to the Caldicott Guardian at caldicott@ukhsa.gov.uk

Compliance with the Human Tissue Act

UKHSA Colindale is licensed by the Human Tissue Authority (licence number 12459) to store tissues from deceased people for scheduled purposes. Post-mortem samples are submitted by coroners or pathologists for examination to help them determine the cause of death.

Please note that consent is mandatory for all scheduled purposes. Samples taken from deceased persons that are sent to UKHSA Colindale for testing, where such testing is not related to determining the cause of death as directed by the coroner, will require appropriate consent from the deceased person or their relatives. For example, testing of post mortem material for infectious agents following a needlestick injury sustained during the post mortem will require consent. It is the obligation of the requesting clinician or pathologist to ensure that appropriate consent has been obtained.

Obtaining consent to remove, store and use human tissues for a scheduled purpose is one of the underlying principles of the Human Tissue Act. Public Health Microbiology Laboratories

Colindale receives post-mortem samples from coroners' post-mortems or from NHS establishments across the UK and therefore we are performing the examination under the authority of the coroner. Unless consent has been obtained or the coroner has requested that samples are retained for further testing, samples are disposed of within 3 months of the initial test being performed.

When tissue samples from deceased people are received at Public Health Microbiology Laboratories Colindale they are retained securely, and confidentiality is maintained in compliance with Caldicott principles as are all samples received at this centre. It is normal practice for tissue samples from the deceased to be disposed of in the same way that all other clinical samples we receive are disposed of. However, we will adhere to any specific requirements regarding disposal or returning tissue samples if requested by the sending coroner or pathologist.

A to Z listing of services available

Testing pathways for services incorporating sequencing include aspects delivered by partners within UKHSA, including the ISO 15189:2022 accredited Colindale Sequencing Laboratory (CSL; UKAS reference 8727) and Bioinformatics (UKAS reference 10742). These are managed in accordance with the requirements of ISO 15189:2022 and TPS71 (Accreditation of healthcare diagnostic pathways delivered between multiple UKAS customers).

Details of the current accreditation status and which partners have contributed to the testing pathway are available for each test on request.

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
<i>Achromobacter</i> spp.	Species identification, molecular typing and antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Acinetobacter</i> spp.	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
Actinomycetes (aerobic only)	Antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
	Identification and confirmation	Pure culture, agar slope	7 days	M1, H2	AMHRA
Antibiotic testing (susceptibility service)	Interpretive analysis of MIC profiles and therapeutic guidance using standard antibiotic panels based on EUCAST and CLSI recommendations. If you have requirements for testing specific antibiotics, please ensure these are listed on the referral form. The main examples are in this 'Services' table but most species other than <i>Mycobacterium</i> spp. and anaerobes are covered. Referral forms must clearly state how submissions meet the referral criteria outlined in Tables 1 and 2 of the user manual. If you are unsure whether your submission meets our referral criteria, please email the AMRHA Reference Unit prior to sending the sample. MIC determination is not undertaken on rectal or faecal isolates or environmental isolates. Lack of EUCAST clinical breakpoints is not sufficient justification alone for referral. Diagnostic laboratories should familiarise themselves with EUCAST guidance 'When there are no breakpoints in breakpoint tables?' and undertake testing locally; AMRHA can advise on appropriate growth conditions.	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days)	H1, H2	AMRHA
Bacillus (other than <i>B. anthracis</i>)	Identification of <i>Bacillus</i> spp. by MALDI-TOF	Pure culture, agar slope	10 days	L4	GBRU
	Molecular typing of <i>B. cereus</i> for outbreak investigations	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	L4	GBRU
	Detection of <i>B. cereus</i> emetic toxin gene by PCR	Pure culture, agar slope	10 days	L4	GBRU
	Antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
Bacterial Identification	Species identification	Pure culture, agar slope	7 days	H2, M1	AMRHA

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
Service (BIDS): Isolate identification (unknown, atypical fastidious, emerging bacteria)	Isolate identification (unknown, atypical, fastidious, emerging bacteria)	Pure culture, agar slope	7 days	H2, M1	AMRHA
	Antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
Clinical sample identification (culture negative, unknown)	Bacterial detection and species identification for culture-negative clinical samples from normally sterile sites	Normally sterile site clinical sample: liquid (200 to 500µl), Tissue (1cm ²) FFPE (up to 3 sections, each thickens of up to 10µm and a surface area of up to 250mm ²)	7 days	M1	AMRHA
<i>Bartonella</i> spp.	16S rRNA gene PCR and sequencing	Normally sterile site clinical sample except blood or serum (see BIDS for details)	7 days	M1	AMRHA
<i>Bordetella</i> spp.	Confirmation of identification, serotyping of <i>B. pertussis</i>	Pure culture on a suitable agar slope or growth from a plate on swab in charcoal transport medium	Varies	R3	RVPBRU
	Antimicrobial susceptibility (species other than <i>B. pertussis</i>)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Bordetella pertussis</i>	Serology – anti-PT IgG antibodies (not suitable for immune status)	Not less than 400µL serum in a sterile container (≥2week history of cough)	12 days	R3	RVPBRU
	Oral fluid – anti-PT IgG antibodies (not suitable for immune status)	Oral fluid for notified cases 2 to <17 years (≥2week history of cough). Contact HPT for kit.	12 days	Form distributed with kit	RVPBRU
<i>Burkholderia</i> spp.	Species identification, typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility. N.B. neither EUCAST nor CLSI recommend susceptibility testing to guide patient treatment due to a lack of accurate testing methods, and evidence to describe a relationship between <i>in vitro</i> susceptibility and clinical outcome is lacking.	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Burkholderia pseudomallei</i>	Identification and antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	2 to 7 days	Contact Lab. H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	MLST by WGS is for <i>C. jejuni</i> and <i>C. coli</i> only. Confirmation of identification only by WGS for all other <i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	Pure culture sent on Amies charcoal swab (preferably) or other suitable medium (for example, blood or chocolate agar slope)	14 days	L4	GBRU
Chlamydia (respiratory)	<i>C. pneumoniae</i> / <i>C. psittaci</i> / <i>C. abortus</i> – PCR assay	Minimum 200µL of respiratory sample (sputum, bronchoalveolar lavage, lung biopsy or throat swab in viral transport medium). For any other sample type, contact lab – NO URINES	5 days	R1	RVPBRU
<i>Clostridium botulinum</i>	Detection and identification of <i>C. botulinum</i> from clinical, food or environmental samples by PCR and culture.	Faeces (10g) or rectal washout into anaerobic broth (universal) or in sterile container. Wound, pus, debrided tissue, preferably inoculated in	Clinical specimens: 9 days Food: Varies	Contact lab before sending specimens.	GBRU

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
		anaerobic broth (universal) – NO SWABS. Food or drink samples (10g or 10 ml). Please contact lab of shipping condition for food samples. Pure culture suspected to be of <i>C. botulinum</i> into anaerobic broth (universal) - NO SWABS.		L4 (culture) L5 (specimen) L7 (Food/Env)	
	Detection of botulinum neurotoxins in clinical specimens or food associated with suspected cases. Please note: The detection of preformed botulinum neurotoxins in clinical specimens or food matrices falls outside the scope of accreditation under ISO 17025 and ISO 15189.	Faeces (10g) or rectal washout in sterile container. Serum (≥ 5ml;) collected close to the onset of symptoms (preferably < 3 days) and before antitoxin is given (lysed or EDTA treated blood specimens are not suitable). Food or drink samples (10g or 10 ml).	Varies	Contact lab before sending specimens. L5 (specimen) L7 (Food/Env)	GBRU
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	Identification of enterotoxigenic <i>C. perfringens</i> by PCR	Pure culture in anaerobic broth or transport swab	5 days	L4	GBRU
	Molecular typing for outbreak investigations	Pure culture in anaerobic broth or transport swab	15 days	L4	GBRU
	Detection of <i>C. perfringens</i> enterotoxin in faeces by ELISA	≥1g or 1mL of faeces from cases of diarrhoea collected as close to the onset of symptoms as possible (preferably less than 3 days)	5 days	L5	GBRU
	<i>C. perfringens</i> toxin (lethal toxins) typing by PCR	Pure cultures of <i>C. perfringens</i> in anaerobic broth or transport swab	5 days	L4	GBRU
<i>Clostridium tetani</i>	Detection and identification of <i>C. tetani</i> by PCR and culture	Pure cultures of <i>C. tetani</i> in anaerobic broth. Tissue inoculated into anaerobic broth	9 days	L5 (specimen) L4 (culture)	GBRU
	Tetanus immunity: serum antibodies	Not less than 200µL serum in a sterile container. (In suspected cases, sample should be taken pre-IVIG treatment.)	21 days unless urgent	R3	RVPBRU
<i>Corynebacterium spp.</i>	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 2 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	Contact lab H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Corynebacterium diphtheriae</i> / <i>ulcerans</i> / <i>pseudotuberculosis</i>	<i>C. diphtheriae</i> / <i>ulcerans</i> / <i>pseudotuberculosis</i> (potentially toxigenic corynebacteria): identification and toxin testing by real-time PCR and Elek test, antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 2 of this user manual)	Pure culture on blood, chocolate, nutrient or Loeffler agar slope (notify lab prior to submission)	Within 24 hours (PCR) 6-day service	Contact lab R3	RVPBRU
	Diphtheria immunity: serum antibodies	Not less than 200µL serum in a sterile container.	21 days unless urgent	R3	RVPBRU
<i>Corynebacterium jeikeium</i>	<i>C. jeikeium</i> antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
<i>Cronobacter</i> spp.	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	Contact lab H1, H2	AMRHA1
Cystic fibrosis (CF) Pathogen	Identification and typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS)	Pure culture, agar slope	18 days	H2	AMRHA1
	Antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
<i>Elizabethkingia</i> spp.	Identification, typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
<i>Enterobacter</i> spp.	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this User manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
<i>Enterococcus</i> spp.	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (WGS typing for clinical clusters only; susceptibility testing only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 2 of this User manual))	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
<i>Escherichia</i> spp.	<i>E. coli</i> (ACDP HG 2 only): whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this User manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
	Identification, serotyping and molecular typing by whole genome sequencing. We can offer fast identification of HG3 <i>E. coli</i> (STEC) by PCR upon request	Pure culture on Dorset's egg or nutrient agar slope	14 days	L4	GBRU
	PCR and culture detection from faeces for non-O157 STEC	Faecal sample in standard sealed container ≥1 gram	8 days	L5	GBRU
Gram-negative bacteria non-fermenter and fastidious organisms	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
Gram-positive bacteria (except <i>C. diphtheriae</i>)	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 2 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA1
<i>Haemophilus ducreyi</i>	Molecular detection by real-time PCR Note: this assay is outside of ISO15189 scope	Fresh ulcer swab, dry swab or swab in viral transport medium is optimal (please refer to STIRL section for referral criteria as travel must be indicated) N.B. as per current guidance, specimens will be inactivated prior to DNA extraction in case of mpox infection	Contact the laboratory	B8 (state clearly <i>H. ducreyi</i> testing required)	STIRL
<i>Haemophilus</i> spp.	<i>Haemophilus</i> spp. (excluding <i>H. ducreyi</i>): Identification	Pure culture on chocolate agar slope with cap securely screwed down	12 days	R3	RVPBRU

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
	<i>H. influenzae</i> : Serotyping and capsular genotyping of <i>H. influenzae</i>	Pure culture on chocolate agar slope with cap securely screwed down	12 days	R3	RVPBRU
<i>Haemophilus</i> spp. And <i>Aggregatibacter</i> spp.	Antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHAI
<i>Helicobacter pylori</i> .	<i>H. pylori</i> isolation, identification and antibiotic susceptibility testing by Etest.	Heavy suspension of isolate or gastric biopsies in sterile saline or a suitable <i>H. pylori</i> transport medium	19 days	L4 (culture) L5 (specimen) Please avoid sending samples on Fridays	GBRU
<i>Klebsiella</i> spp.	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHAI
<i>Legionella</i> spp.	Confirmation of sending lab urine test result for <i>L. pneumophila</i> serogroup 1 using a commercial EIA kit	Not less than 2mL urine sample (soon after onset), mid-stream, early morning with or without preservatives in a sterile container.	8 days unless urgent	R1	RVPBRU
	<i>L. pneumophila</i> PCR (from urinary antigen positive patients only)	Lower respiratory tract samples – >2mL (sputa, BAL, tracheal aspirate) and other clinical samples in a sterile container	Urgent samples – notify by phone	R1	RVPBRU
	<i>Legionella</i> spp. qPCR molecular detection and culture: from urine antigen negative patients admitted with pneumonia (including <i>L. longbeachae</i>) and routine respiratory pathogen screen negative patients only.	Lower respiratory tract samples – >2mL (sputa, BAL, tracheal aspirate) and other clinical samples in a sterile container	Urgent samples – notify by phone	R1 clearly marked 'Legionella species'	RVPBRU
	Identification and epidemiological typing of clinical or outbreak associated isolates	Pure culture on either BCYE medium or a dense suspension in sterile distilled water or Page's saline	Varies	R1	RVPBRU
Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) – <i>Chlamydia trachomatis</i> (L1 to L3 genovars)	Molecular detection by real-time PCR	Urine (neat or in NAATs buffer), rectal and genital swabs (note swabs are accepted from cisgender-men, transgender women and transgender men only, please refer to STIRL section for details), minimum of 3 mL neat urine, 600µL residual NAAT buffer, swabs in transport medium, a fresh dry swab. Note: charcoal swabs are not suitable for this test. N.B. as per current guidance, specimens will be inactivated prior to DNA extraction in case of mpox infection.	6 days	B7	STIRL
<i>Listeria</i> spp.	Listeria species identification, serotyping and typing of <i>L. monocytogenes</i> by whole genome sequencing and SNP analysis	Pure culture, agar slope	14 days	L4	GBRU

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
	Antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHAJ
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i>	Antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHAJ
<i>Mycobacterium abscessus</i> complex	Molecular typing	Pure culture, agar slope or liquid culture	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHAJ
<i>Mycoplasma</i> spp.	<i>M. hominis</i> and <i>Ureaplasma</i> spp.: PCR and/or culture	Minimum volume 200µL of respiratory, CSF, blood culture, joint and wound, aspirates in a sterile container, swab preferably in VCM (not VTM) transport medium – NO URINES and SERUM	PCR: 5 days Culture: up to 8 days	R1	RVPBRU
	Mycoplasma or Ureaplasma: characterisation and molecular methods	Pure culture on mycoplasma medium or chocolate / blood agar slope	Varies	R1	RVPBRU
	<i>M. pneumoniae</i> : PCR and determination of mutations associated with macrolide resistance by PCR and sequencing.	Minimum volume 200µL of respiratory sample (LRT) in a sterile container or throat swab preferably in VCM (not VTM) transport medium. CSF with paired respiratory samples or DNA extract of positive specimen – NO URINES	5 days (PCR) 10 days (macrolide resistance testing) Culture: up to 49 days	R1	RVPBRU
	<i>M. genitalium</i> : Molecular detection of the adhesion <i>MgPa</i> and <i>gap</i> genes and determination of mutations associated with macrolide resistance by PCR and sequencing on all clinical specimens found positive for <i>M. genitalium</i> . Molecular detection of fluoroquinolone resistance is available for patients who have failed quinolone and macrolide treatment, and where clinically indicated.	Residual unprocessed NAAT buffer or swab in transport medium (minimum volume 600µL), fresh dry swab, urine (minimum volume 3mL) or extracted DNA (minimum volume 60µL) (from previously positive specimens). Samples must be received within 2 weeks of collection to maintain clinical relevance. NB: as per current guidance, specimens will be inactivated prior to DNA extraction in case of mpox infection	8 days	B2	STIRL
<i>Neisseria gonorrhoeae</i> (putative) For other <i>Neisseria</i> spp. please refer to the Bacterial Identification Section.	<i>N. gonorrhoeae</i> : Confirmation of identification by MALDI ToF. Further phenotypic and molecular methods will be used where necessary. Medico-legal processing is not available for isolates which have already been confirmed as <i>N. gonorrhoeae</i> by 2 different tests.	Pure culture on chocolate slope or VCM swab	7 days	B2 For medico-legal isolates, contact lab before sending	STIRL
	Susceptibility testing for isolates that exhibit resistance to ceftriaxone or from suspected treatment failures only.	Pure culture on chocolate slope or VCM swab. Note: if an isolate is unavailable residual NAATs buffer will be accepted (minimum volume 600µL).	7 days	B2	STIRL
	Disseminated gonococcal or ocular infection: Confirmation of identification by MALDI ToF. Further phenotypic and molecular	Pure culture on chocolate slope or VCM swab. Note: if an isolate is unavailable residual	7 days	B2	STIRL

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
	methods will be used where necessary.	specimens will be accepted			
	Programme: Gonococcal Resistance to Antimicrobials Surveillance Programme (GRASP)	Isolate submission is based on a pre-agreement between the laboratory and STIRL	GRASP Annual Report	Contact lab before sending isolates	STIRL
<i>Nocardia</i> spp.	Antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
	Identification and confirmation	Pure culture, agar slope	7 days	M1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Pandoraea</i> spp.	Molecular typing and antimicrobial susceptibility	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Pseudomonas</i> spp.	Molecular typing and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
Resistance mechanism detection	Molecular detection of acquired carbapenemase genes and transferable colistin resistance genes in Gram-negatives, and characterisation of linezolid resistance mechanisms in staphylococci and enterococci (G2576T mutation, plus plasmid mediated linezolid resistance genes).	Pure culture, Agar slope	14 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Salmonella</i> spp.	Identification to genus and species level and determination of sequence types and serovar by whole genome sequencing.	Pure culture on Dorset's egg or nutrient agar slope	17 days	L4	GBRU
	Analysis of whole genome sequence data to support outbreak investigations.	Pure culture on Dorset's egg or nutrient agar slope	By arrangement	L4	GBRU
<i>Serratia</i> spp.	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual).	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H1, H2	AMRHA
<i>Shigella</i> spp.	Identification to genus and species level and molecular typing by whole genome sequencing.	Pure culture on Dorset's egg or nutrient agar slope	14 days	L4	GBRU
<i>Staphylococcus</i> sp.	<i>S. aureus</i> (multiple isolates from suspected clusters): molecular typing derived from whole genome sequence data.	Pure culture, agar slope	14 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	<i>S. aureus</i> (single isolates): molecular typing derived from whole genome sequence data.	Pure culture, agar slope	14 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	Staphylococcus coagulase negative: species identification and molecular typing.	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	Antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 2 of this user manual).	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	Resistance gene detection derived from whole genome sequence data.	Pure culture, agar slope	14 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	<i>S. aureus</i> : PVL testing only.	Pure culture, agar slope	6 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	Virulence gene detection (14 genes, incl. PVL) derived from whole genome sequence data.	Pure culture, agar slope	14 days	H3, H4	AMRHA
	Enterotoxin gene detection (suspected staphylococcal food	Pure culture, agar slope	14 days	H3, H4	AMRHA

Services	Test type	Sample required	Target turnaround times (TATs)	BRD Request forms	Contact unit
	poisoning) derived from whole genome sequence data.				
Stenotrophomonas	Typing by whole genome sequencing (WGS) and antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 1 of this user manual).	Pure culture, agar slope	15 days	H3, H4	AMRHAI
Streptococcus spp. and related genera	<i>S. pyogenes</i> (Lancefield Group A): Typing of invasive and outbreak or cluster associated non-invasive isolates using whole genome sequencing.	Pure culture on blood or chocolate agar slope (charcoal swabs not suitable).	14 days	H3, H4	AMRHAI
	<i>S. agalactiae</i> (Lancefield Group B): Typing of invasive and outbreak or cluster associated non-invasive isolates.	Pure culture on blood or chocolate agar slope	8 days	H3, H4	AMRHAI
	Streptococci (Lancefield Group C and G): Typing of invasive and outbreak/cluster associated non-invasive isolates.	Pure culture on blood or chocolate agar slope	8 days	H3, H4	AMRHAI
	<i>S. pneumoniae</i> : Species confirmation and capsule typing of invasive isolates by whole genome sequencing.	Pure culture on blood or chocolate agar slope	14 days unless urgent	R3	RVPBRU
	<i>Streptococcus</i> spp. and related genera identification (<i>Abiotrophia</i> spp., <i>Aerococcus</i> spp., <i>Alloiococcus</i> spp., <i>Dolosicoccus</i> spp., <i>Dolosigranulum</i> spp., <i>Facklamia</i> spp., <i>Gemella</i> spp., <i>Globicatella</i> spp., <i>Granulicatella</i> spp., <i>Helcococcus</i> spp., <i>Ignavigranum</i> spp., <i>Lactococcus</i> spp., <i>Leuconostoc</i> spp., <i>Pediococcus</i> spp., <i>Tetragenococcus</i> spp., <i>Vagococcus</i> spp.)	Pure culture on blood or chocolate agar slope	15 days	H3, H4	AMRHAI
	Antimicrobial susceptibility (only for organisms meeting referral criteria outlined in Table 2 of this user manual)	Pure culture, agar slope			
<i>Treponema pallidum</i>	Molecular detection by real-time PCR	Fresh dry swab or swab in viral transport medium is optimal, taken from genital or oral ulcer or skin rash. NB: as per current guidance, specimens will be inactivated prior to DNA extraction in case of mpox infection. In the case of investigation for congenital syphilis – please see additional information provided on page 65 [Investigations into Congenital Syphilis] as specimen acceptance criteria is broader however, please note testing is outside ISO15189 scope for some sample types.	6 days	B3 B9: Congenital Syphilis Diagnostic Service referral form	STIRL
Ureaplasma	Refer to <i>Mycoplasma</i> spp.			R1	RVPBRU
Vibrio (including Aeromonas and Plesiomonas)	Identification to genus and species level and serotyping	Pure culture on Dorset's egg or nutrient agar slope	14 days	L4	GBRU
Yersinia	Identification to genus and species level	Pure culture on Dorset's egg or nutrient agar slope	14 days	L4	GBRU

The Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infections (AMRHAI) reference unit

[Staff contact details.](#)

To ensure a pure strain is tested please only send a slope of a single colony pick. Should a second strain or colony variant be identified, this could lead to an extra charge being incurred or the sample being rejected. Please contact lab for prices. If you have identified 2 strains which require testing/comparison, please send them as 2 separate slopes of pure cultures.

Bacterial identification service (BIDS)

BIDS provide specialist identification services for 'unknowns', which includes atypical, difficult to isolate or emerging bacterial pathogens detected in culture- negative clinical samples and for isolates with no national reference facility.

Isolate identification

All unknown isolates will first be tested by MALDI-ToF MS, and 16S rRNA gene analysis will only be used where reliable species identification is not achieved. Identification will be supplemented by phenotypic testing for certain groups of organisms where species identification is doubtful or requires additional confirmation.

Atypical and rarely isolated strains

Atypical isolates are those with phenotypic or physiological profiles deviating from the majority of strains belonging to the same genus or species (for example, catalase test, oxidase or sugar fermentation), which affects the ability of the laboratory where it has been isolated to confirm its identity accurately.

Laboratories may also seek confirmatory testing, since the tests currently in use target groups of known clinically significant organisms and may not confirm the identity of emerging and unusual infectious agents.

Bacterial taxa that are difficult to identify to the species level

Such species may have high genetic similarity or paucity in differentiating phenotypic tests resulting in misidentification or may not be well represented in MALDI-ToF MS databases, giving low scores or unreliable identification.

Aerobic actinomycetes

Organisms collectively grouped under the broad category 'aerobic, Gram-positive with or without branching filaments' form a very diverse collection of ill-defined genera and species. Often referred to as the 'non-TB mycobacteria complex', 'Nocardia complex', 'Rhodococcus–Gordonia–Tsukamurella–Corynebacterium complex' and so on, they may be seen in pathology specimens and are often highlighted by the presence of sulphur granules. The taxonomy of this group has been actively investigated over the last 20 years but is still in a state of flux. Their poor phenotypic identification is often compounded by their slow and poor growth.

Note: Some *Mycobacterium* spp. isolates are similar in morphology to aerobic actinomycetes. If the isolate or a clinical sample is suspected to be a member of the Mycobacterium TB-complex based on preliminary tests or clinical assessment, then it is not accepted for this service and should be referred to the UKHSA National Mycobacterium Reference Service in the first instance.

Clinical sample identification

BIDS provide a specialist service for the detection and identification of bacteria in clinical samples from normally sterile samples. Detection is performed by real-time 16S rDNA PCR, which has been shown to improve sensitivity of detection.

Suitable sample types include tissue (for example, native heart valves), paraffin-embedded tissue, nonpipettable liquids as pus, and liquids or fluids (for example, blood, CSF, blood culture fluid). Unsuitable samples from non-sterile sites include samples in direct contact with skin or mucous membranes and samples in direct connection to the intestine.

Samples should be transported in a small sterile container (for example, 1.5ml microfuge tube or universal) without adding any additional water, buffers or preservatives. Sterile water or PBS might be contaminated with DNA from pseudomonas and pseudomonas-like bacteria.

The amount of material must be adequate to maintain maximum sensitivity. In general, we recommend 200µl or more for liquid material (no more than 1ml to be supplied) and a 'fingernail'-sized piece of tissue for solid samples approximately 1cm³, selecting the most necrotic diseased area for testing. Please do not submit excess sample material, as this may

result in your sample being quarantined or rejected. For blood culture medium, remove 200µl to 1,000µl of fluid using aseptic technique to a sterile container. Please ensure the source is clearly indicated by ticking the 'blood culture fluid' box on the request form, this helps us to differentiate from other blood samples and for correct protocols to be used for processing.

For paraffin-embedded tissues supply freshly cut sections of FFPE tissue, each with a thickness of up to 10µm. Up to 3 sections, each with a thickness of up to 10µm and a surface area of up to 250 mm², can be combined in one DNA extraction preparation. The histologists should choose tissue sections that show signs of infection or show anything on gram stain and removal of any excess wax from the sections would be most helpful. These sections should be placed in a sterile universal or tube and no buffers or water added.

Outcome of identification tests include:

- identifying atypical isolates or novel pathogens that fail identification by conventional methods
- confirmation of identification of aerobic actinomycetes
- identification of bacteria detected in samples from normally sterile sites

The important factors affecting our ability to provide a timely service include:

- inappropriate or incorrectly completed request forms
- safety question on request form not completed
- low growing fastidious organisms
- mixed cultures submitted
- insufficient clinical sample submitted
- non-sterile site clinical samples submitted

Opportunistic pathogens section

Identification by MALDI-ToF MS and sequence-based methods is offered for pathogens from patients with cystic fibrosis and for other opportunistic pathogens, especially *Acinetobacter*, *Burkholderia*, *Enterobacter*, *Enterococcus*, *Klebsiella*, *Achromobacter*, *Pandora* and *Ralstonia* species. *Burkholderia pseudomallei* is identified by species specific PCR.

Note: AMRHA will not perform identification to species level on *Pseudomonas* spp. (non-*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* strains).

The main factor affecting our ability to offer a timely and clinically relevant service is the lack of clinical information.

Requests for work on presumptive isolates must include:

- full details of sending laboratory's results
- an indication of whether the isolates may be a hazard group 3 organism – failure to provide necessary information on the form can result in an isolate being handled at Containment Level 2 instead of Containment Level 3, putting staff at risk (in these instances, a report of the incident will be sent to the Health and Safety Executive)
- full clinical details, including clinical and contact history: failure to provide necessary clinical information on the form can also result in an isolate being tested using inappropriate methods which will delay reporting
- an indication of any recent travel abroad

Molecular (DNA-based) typing

For inter-strain comparative purposes, a molecular typing service is available for all the organisms listed above, plus any other species involved in suspected outbreaks of healthcare-associated infection. Whole genome sequencing (WGS) is used for all species except for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Mycobacterium abscessus* complex which are typed using variable number tandem repeat (VNTR) analysis. Please note that presently WGS for opportunistic pathogens, with the exception of WGS for typing of *Escherichia coli*, is under validation and as such is not accredited by UKAS.

Please note that we no longer provide typing of screening isolates of *Enterococcus* spp.

In addition, the following are offered:

- Identification of capsular types (especially K1, K2, K5, K54, and K57 of *Klebsiella* spp., associated with invasive disease), and detection of virulence genes (including *iroB*, *iucA*, *iutA*, *peg-344*, *ompA*, *ompA2*, *ybtP*) associated with *Klebsiella* spp. hypervirulence.

Requests for typing must include.

1. The reason for the request – that is, details of the comparisons sought and of the underlying question posed (we regret that 'ongoing surveillance' and 'vancomycin resistant enterococcus' will not be considered sufficient).
2. Please include an accurate identification; wrong identifications can result in organisms going through inappropriate typing methods and irrelevant comparisons.
3. Please do not send single isolates for typing with no indication of any relevant comparison. Any relevant details (for example, ward information) that you can give that link potentially related organisms are much appreciated.
4. Please use the H1 multiple isolates form (available at Healthcare pathogens request form: multiple isolates) for typing investigations, which should detail the comparison required.

Staphylococcus and Streptococcus Reference Section (SSRS)

Staphylococcus species

The 'spa typing' service is no longer available, and it is now replaced with WGS service. A 'phage typing' service for *S. aureus* is no longer available. The International set of *S. aureus* 'phages, together with their propagating strains, are available from NCTC.

Whole-genome sequencing

The analysis of WGS data to support outbreak investigations was launched in April 2020. Genetic relatedness of isolates linked to a cluster is assessed by single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) based analyses from WGS data. Outbreak report includes:

- lineage (Multi Locus Sequence Type – MLST)
- cluster address (derived from SNP analysis)

WGS is available for the characterisation of single isolates of MSSA or MRSA referred for testing. These include isolates referred for reasons such as:

- surveillance – for example, MRSA or MSSA from cases of bacteraemia
- typing, antimicrobial resistance gene and/or toxin gene profiling
- such as the identification of suspected hospital versus community versus livestock-associated MRSA

Depending on the nature of the reason for referral, the following will be derived and reported from WGS data.

1. The lineage (MLST)
2. The detection of resistance genes including:
 - *mecA* and its homologue *mecC*, which confer resistance to oxacillin (charged)
 - *mupA* and *mupB* which confer high-level resistance to mupirocin (charged)
3. Toxin gene profiling (charged), providing insights into strain virulence, including:
 - 9 enterotoxin genes (sea-see and seg-sei)
 - 3 exfoliative toxin genes eta, etb and etd
 - toxic shock syndrome toxin gene 1 (tst)
 - Pantan-Valentine Leukocidin toxin gene (luk-PV) Main factors affecting the performance of the test include:
 - o mixed culture
 - o single isolate with no indication of what it should be compared with
 - o lack of epidemiological information

Non-enteric disease

When requesting *S. aureus* toxin gene testing, select either PVL-testing only or extended toxin gene profiling (the latter includes all 14 toxin genes listed above). Where the toxin request is **not** diagnostic, we will not charge but the free text field **must** contain the relevant previous referral details of related isolates. For example, MS-Colindale Laboratory reference numbers or details of the outbreak or diagnostic isolates sent previously. If this is not included, we will assume it relates to primary diagnosis and will charge accordingly.

Enteric disease

Isolates of *S. aureus* from foods and/or cases of suspected food poisoning are screened for 9 enterotoxin genes (A to E and G to J). Where detection of staphylococcal enterotoxins in samples of food or beverages is required, please contact the London FW&E

FWEM@ukhsa.gov.uk

PVL testing

Screening of isolates for the presence of the Panton-Valentine Leukocidin toxin genes (luk- PV) by real-time PCR is available as a 'stand-alone' test (charged).

Identification of coagulase-negative staphylococci (CoNS)

Isolates are identified by MALDI-ToF MS (Charged). Where reliable species identification cannot be achieved, isolates are analysed by 16S rRNA gene analysis. This part of the service is accredited under ISO15189:2022.

Important factors affecting the performance of these tests include:

- slow growers
- organisms with specific growth requirements

Whole genome sequence (WGS) typing of coagulase negative staphylococci (CNS)

Note: This service is awaiting UKAS accreditation.

Regarding requesting CNS typing usually as this involves multiple isolates the H4 form is used and may be indicated in the 'Typing - please specify' section or the 'Additional Information' section.

The analysis of WGS data to support inter strain comparison and outbreak investigations for CNS isolates was introduced in 2022. The genetic relatedness of isolates is assessed by single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) based analyses from WGS data. Outbreak reports include Strain Determination data derived from SNP analysis which indicates the relatedness of the

isolates and may also include Lineage Determination data, this is specifically for reports involving isolates of *S. capitis* suspected of belonging to the NRCS-A Neonate lineage.'

Lancefield group A streptococci (GAS), *Streptococcus pyogenes*

Genotypic classification and epidemiological typing of group A streptococci (GAS), *Streptococcus pyogenes*. Typing of GAS is useful in the investigation of both community and hospital outbreaks of GAS infection.

Emm Typing of GAS by WGS is based upon determination of the M-protein which is inferred by sequencing the *emm* gene. *emm* genotyping (genotypic characterisation of the *emm* gene, which encodes M protein) is performed by sequencing the 5'-hypervariable region of the *emm* gene. More than 130 *emm* sequence types, ST(s) have been identified. Results are reported as an *emm* sequence type, which usually correlates with the M protein type, for example: *emm* ST12 = M type 12.

The laboratory requests submission of ALL GAS isolated from blood culture or other normally sterile sites as part of the national surveillance of invasive disease due to GAS.

The specimens or samples to send:

- pure culture on blood or chocolate agar slope – charcoal swabs are not suitable

SSRS offers a reference service for WGS typing of *S. pyogenes* strains from non-invasive infections if linked to a cluster of infection under investigation and/ or presented with severe symptoms like SSS, TSST, necrotising fasciitis, necrotising pneumonia). Non-invasive isolates of *S. pyogenes* (that is, isolates from throat swabs) referred without a notification that is linked to cluster investigation will be charged.

Please indicate details on the referral form regarding cases under investigation for cross-infection or cluster investigation.

If seeking MICs only from non-invasive *S. pyogenes* isolates, please refer directly to the Antimicrobial Resistance and Mechanisms Service (ARMS).

Lancefield Group B Streptococci (GBS), *Streptococcus agalactiae*

Serological classification and epidemiological typing of Lancefield group B streptococci. The serological classification of GBS is based upon the identification of polysaccharide and protein antigens. There are currently 10 polysaccharide antigens designated, Ia, Ib, II, III, IV,

V, VI, VII, VIII, IX. The most common polysaccharide antigens in the UK are serotypes Ia, Ib, II or III. Serotype III is most commonly associated with neonatal infections.

GBS are a relatively common cause of puerperal and neonatal infections, which may be nosocomially acquired. Epidemiological typing may assist in the investigation of apparent clusters or outbreaks of GBS sepsis in all age groups.

The laboratory requests submission of **all** group B streptococci isolated from blood culture or other normally sterile sites of neonates as part of the national surveillance of invasive disease due to GBS in this age group (0 to 90 days).

GBS may also cause systemic infection in adults (non-pregnancy related). We are pleased to receive blood culture or other 'sterile site' isolates for typing and surveillance purposes. We do not offer a reference service for typing of *S. agalactiae* isolates from non-invasive infections unless linked to a cluster of infection under investigation. An admin charge will be applied for the referral of non-cluster related superficial isolates of *S. agalactiae* (for example, isolates from ear or rectal swabs).

Where typing of non-invasive *S. agalactiae* is required in the investigation of clusters or instances of suspected cross-infection in hospitals or other please contact SSRS, and details must be included on the referral form.

If seeking MICs only from non-invasive *S. agalactiae* isolates, please refer directly to Antimicrobial Resistance and Mechanisms Service (ARMS).

Lancefield group C and group G streptococci

For urgent public health investigations and in other relevant clinical circumstances, after discussion and agreement with unit or section heads similar typing to GAS can be undertaken.

Group C and G streptococci may cause both nosocomial (for example, burns unit cross-infection episodes) or institutional outbreaks. Group C and G streptococci may also cause systemic infections in adults and in particular the taxonomy of group C streptococci may have clinical implications, as (with the exception of the human species *S. dysgalactiae subsp. equisimilis*) they are all primarily animal species. Group C streptococci of animal origin, for example, *S. equi subsp. zooepidemicus* may cause severe systemic infections in humans. Such infections may occur in clusters and have been associated with the consumption of raw milk.

The current typing methodology for these streptococci is based upon the detection and sequence of the *emm* gene, which encodes the major virulence factor, the M protein. The human group C and group G streptococci carry M protein antigens that are both serologically and genotypically distinct from those carried by the Lancefield group A streptococcus and are useful epidemiological markers.

Emm typing is based on sequence analysis of the hypervariable portion of the *emm* gene that dictates the M serotype. Further information available on the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) webpage](#).

The laboratory requests submission of all group C and G streptococci isolated from blood culture or other normally sterile sites as part of the national surveillance of invasive disease due to group C and G streptococci.

We do not offer a reference service for typing of group C and G streptococcal strains from non-invasive infections unless linked to a cluster of infection under investigation. Non-invasive group C and G streptococcal isolates (that is, isolates from ear or rectal swabs) without notification that is part of cluster investigation will be charged.

If seeking MICs only from non-invasive group C and G streptococcus isolates, refer directly to [Antimicrobial Resistance and Mechanisms Service \(ARMS\)](#).

Identification of streptococci and related genera

Referred (charged for) taxonomic identification service for streptococci and other related Gram-positive, catalase negative genera from systemic and other significant infections. However, a free-of-charge reference service will continue to be available for urgent public health investigations, outbreaks and incident management, either nosocomial or community based. This should be discussed and agreed with the section head.

An identification scheme incorporating updated taxonomic methodologies is used. Updated nomenclature based upon both the UK and USA classification schemes is used to subdivide streptococci into many species. For example, the 'sanguinis group' is subdivided into *S. sanguinis*, *S. parasanguinis*, *S. gordonii* and *S. cristatus*. *S. australis*, the 'anginosus group', is subdivided into *S. anginosus*, *S. constellatus subsp constellatus*, *S. intermedius* and *S. constellatus subsp. pharyngis*.

Isolates that needs MIC and that are not streptococci and may be an enterococcus or a Gram-positive rod will be referred to the ARMS below. The turnaround time in this instance will vary.

Antimicrobial Resistance and Mechanisms Service

Confirmation of unusual resistances

AMRHAI investigates isolates found by diagnostic laboratories to have unusual resistances (see [Tables 1 and 2](#) in this user manual), aiming to identify (i) treatment options (ii) emerging

resistance of public health importance (iii) underlying resistance mechanisms (iv) clonal spread of resistant strains. We have the capacity to determine the activity of most antibiotics available in the UK against most species (excluding obligate anaerobes, category 3, sexually transmitted and enteric pathogens, and *Mycobacteria* spp.).

Please clearly state how your submission meets our referral criteria and your requirements clearly on the request form; **failure to provide adequate reasons for submission to AMRHAI will result in rejection of your isolate without testing.**

For isolates that do not meet our referral criteria, but for which susceptibility testing remains necessary due to clinical demand, **testing should be undertaken locally.** Diagnostic laboratories should familiarise themselves with [EUCAST guidance](#) for susceptibility testing of organisms or agents for which there are no EUCAST breakpoints. Lack of EUCAST clinical breakpoints is not sufficient justification alone for referral to AMRHAI. This includes genera such as *Nocardia* spp. and organisms formerly classified as nutritionally variant streptococci amongst many others. Isolates should only be referred to AMRHAI if from invasive sites of infections (for example, blood, CSF, joint or pleural fluid), or if local testing identifies unusual resistance that requires confirmation. Please contact AMRHAI if you require advice on growth conditions or assistance with interpreting your MIC values.

While AMRHAI is willing to examine a wide range of unusual resistance phenotypes for customers, diagnostic laboratories should be aware of [EUCAST guidelines regarding expert rules and expected phenotypes](#). [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) identify combinations of organism or resistance phenotypes that AMRHAI views as exceptional. Any bacterial isolates exhibiting these resistance phenotypes should first be reviewed by diagnostic laboratories in line with EUCAST guidance to ensure accuracy of the results. If resistance is confirmed, we advise referral of the isolates to AMRHAI.

We are happy to examine other **unusual** combinations of resistances and organisms, and cases where the sender has obtained conflicting results by different methods (for example, where an automated system identifies an isolate as having a particular resistance phenotype, but this cannot be confirmed by classical methodology).

Determination of MIC values for referred isolates is undertaken by broth microdilution ([Table 3](#) lists bacterial genera and antibiotics for which MICs can be determined by broth microdilution), gradient strip test (used to determine MICs for all other bacteria listed in [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) and/or antibiotics not listed in [Table 3](#)), agar dilution (fosfomycin only) and disc diffusion (cefiderocol only). Interpretative reading of these antibiograms allows assessment of the likely dominant underlying resistance mechanisms. The antibiotics we report MIC values for are those listed in EUCAST or CLSI guidelines as appropriate for the species.

NHS diagnostic laboratories will be charged for MIC determination unless exceptional resistance is confirmed and a further charge per additional antibiotic is applied for determining MICs of antibiotics outside of our standard panels. A charge will also apply for resolution of

mixed cultures (susceptibility testing will not be performed on submissions that yield more than 2 colony variants). A standard charge is applied when the bacterial identification obtained by AMRHAI differs significantly from the identification stated on the referral form (for example, Gram-negative referred but Gram- positive organism isolated; Enterobacterales referred but Gram-negative non-fermenter isolated).

For the correct interpretation of susceptibilities, use of appropriate breakpoints and interpretation of mechanisms, isolates must be correctly identified to species level. You will be charged if unidentified 'coliform' or 'Gram-negative rod' isolates are submitted, unless also formally sent for reference identification.

Note: we no longer offer a service for detecting extended-spectrum beta-lactamase (ESBL) or acquired AmpC as there are now many commercial diagnostic tests available to undertake this work locally.

By following [EUCAST guidance](#) diagnostic laboratories should be able to identify, and differentiate between, ESBL and AmpC activity without the need for referral to AMRHAI.

We no longer determine MICs for isolates from rectal or faecal screens (that is isolates representing patient colonisation), or for those isolated from environmental samples. Should a patient go on to develop an infection, we will be happy to perform susceptibility testing on the clinically relevant isolate if it meets our referral criteria. We will also continue to determine MICs for carbapenemase- producing Enterobacterales from other sample types (if required).

Main factors affecting the performance of the test include:

- slow growers
- organisms with specific growth requirements
- organisms which have not been identified

If an isolate is submitted for 'confirmation of results', please be aware that we can only comment if the results requiring confirmation are stated. If you have a query about a report, please contact the AMRHAI Reference Unit using the contact details listed on our reports.

Table 1. Exceptional resistance phenotypes in Gram-negative bacteria

Organism	Antimicrobial resistance phenotype confirmed by diagnostic laboratory	Should this isolate be sent to AMRHAI [note 1]	Tests to be provided by AMRHAI [notes 1, 2]	Further information
Any Enterobacterales	Meropenem MIC >0.125mg/L or meropenem (10µg) disc diffusion zone diameter <28 mm (N.B. if meropenem 25 to 27mm only follow up if piperacillin/tazobactam <17 mm and/or temocillin <11mm). These isolates should be screened for the 'big 4/5' carbapenemases (KPC, OXA-48-like, NDM, VIM +/- IMP) by PCR or immunochromatographic assay.	Yes: isolates positive for the 'big 4/5' carbapenemase families and from invasive infections only should be referred for inclusion in the national strain archive. Isolates negative for the 'big 4/5' carbapenemases from any isolation site should be referred to rule out presence of rarer carbapenemase families.	Real-time PCR to screen for an extended panel of carbapenemase genes [note 2]. MICs on request for isolates from clinical sites only.	UK SMI B 60: detection of bacteria with carbapenem hydrolysing β lactamases (carbapenemases). EUCAST guideline for the detection of resistance mechanisms and specific resistances of clinical and/or epidemiological importance. Do not send isolates of <i>Enterobacter</i> spp. that have borderline resistance to ertapenem but remain fully susceptible to other carbapenems. Do not send isolates of <i>Serratia</i> , <i>Morganella</i> or <i>Proteus</i> spp. that are borderline resistant to imipenem, but susceptible to other carbapenems. We are regularly asked to define criteria for referring carbapenem-resistant bacteria for investigation. These are subjective and under regular review.
	High-level temocillin resistance (MIC >64mg/L; zone diameter <11mm) and piperacillin/tazobactam resistance (MIC >64mg/L; zone diameter <17mm). These isolates should be screened for OXA-48-like carbapenemases by PCR or immunochromatographic assay.	Yes: isolates positive for an OXA-48-like carbapenemase and from invasive infections only should be referred for inclusion in the national strain archive.	MICs on request for isolates from clinical sites only.	UK SMI B 60: detection of bacteria with carbapenem hydrolysing β lactamases (carbapenemases). EUCAST guideline for the detection of resistance mechanisms and specific resistances of clinical and/or epidemiological importance.
	Ceftazidime/avibactam, meropenem/vaborbactam or imipenem/relebactam resistance.	Yes: but only if isolates are confirmed as negative for class B (NDM, VIM or IMP) carbapenemases.	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested.	N/A
	Aztreonam/avibactam resistance	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested.	N/A
	Pan-aminoglycoside resistance (that is, resistance to all of amikacin, gentamicin and tobramycin).	No: confirmation by diagnostic laboratory only.	N/A	
	High-level tigecycline resistance (MIC >4mg/L) (except <i>Serratia</i> spp., <i>Proteus</i> spp., <i>Providencia</i> spp. and <i>Morganella</i> spp.)	No: may be reviewed in the future.	N/A	
Any Enterobacterales	Colistin resistance as determined by broth	Yes: but only if isolates are	Confirmation of resistance by	Antimicrobial susceptibility testing of colistin -

Organism	Antimicrobial resistance phenotype confirmed by diagnostic laboratory	Should this isolate be sent to AMRHAI [note 1]	Tests to be provided by AMRHAI [notes 1, 2]	Further information
(except <i>Serratia</i> spp., <i>Proteus</i> spp. <i>Hafnia</i> spp. and <i>Morganella</i> spp.)	microdilution (use of automated system, disc diffusion or gradient strip test is not appropriate).	found to be resistant via broth microdilution by the diagnostic laboratory.	broth microdilution; testing of alternative agents if requested. Screening for transmissible colistin resistance (<i>mcr</i>) genes.	problems detected with several commercially available products
<i>Acinetobacter</i> spp.	Isolates suspected to produce a metallo-carbapenemase: meropenem or imipenem resistance and exhibit strong imipenem/EDTA synergy.	Yes	Real-time PCR to screen for an extended panel of carbapenemase genes [note 2]. MICs on request for isolates from clinical sites only.	UK SMI B 60: detection of bacteria with carbapenem hydrolysing β lactamases (carbapenemases). EUCAST guideline for the detection of resistance mechanisms and specific resistances of clinical and/or epidemiological importance Do not send isolates of <i>Acinetobacter</i> spp. that are resistant to ertapenem, but susceptible to other carbapenems. Ertapenem resistance is inherent in the genus. We are regularly asked to define criteria for referring carbapenem-resistant bacteria for investigation. These are subjective and under regular review.
	Colistin resistance – see Any Enterobacterales above			
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	Resistance to all of imipenem, meropenem, ceftazidime and piperacillin/tazobactam and exhibiting strong imipenem or meropenem/EDTA synergy (irrespective of susceptibility or resistance to aztreonam). These isolates should be screened locally for NDM, VIM and IMP carbapenemases by PCR or immunochromatographic assay.	Yes: isolates positive for NDM, VIM or IMP carbapenemase families and from invasive infections only should be referred for inclusion in the national strain archive. Isolates negative for VIM, NDM or IMP carbapenemases and exhibiting strong imipenem or meropenem / EDTA synergy should be referred to rule out presence of rarer carbapenemase families.	Interpretive reading of antibiogram derived by AMRHAI to infer underlying resistance mechanism. Real-time PCR to screen for resistance mechanisms if appropriate [note 2]	UK SMI B 60: detection of bacteria with carbapenem hydrolysing β lactamases (carbapenemases). EUCAST guideline for the detection of resistance mechanisms and specific resistances of clinical and/or epidemiological importance Do not send isolates of <i>Pseudomonas</i> spp. that are resistant to ertapenem, but susceptible to other carbapenems. Ertapenem resistance is inherent in the genus. We are regularly asked to define criteria for referring carbapenem-resistant bacteria for investigation. These are subjective and under regular review.
	Colistin resistance – see Any Enterobacterales above			
	Ceftolozane/tazobactam resistance (MIC >2 mg/L)	Yes	Interpretive reading of antibiogram derived by	N/A

Organism	Antimicrobial resistance phenotype confirmed by diagnostic laboratory	Should this isolate be sent to AMRHAI [note 1]	Tests to be provided by AMRHAI [notes 1, 2]	Further information
			AMRHAI to infer underlying resistance mechanism. Real-time PCR to screen for resistance mechanisms if appropriate [note 2].	
Other non-fermenters	Co-trimoxazole resistance	Yes - if alternative agents required	Testing of alternative agents if requested.	Stenotrophomonas maltophilia
	Carbapenem resistance in <i>Stenotrophomonas maltophilia</i> , <i>Aeromonas</i> spp., <i>Myroides</i> spp., <i>Elizabethkingia</i> spp. and 'chryseobacteria'	No	N/A	Do not send for investigation of carbapenem resistance because metallo-carbapenemase production is an intrinsic characteristic of these bacteria
<i>Haemophilus influenzae</i>	Resistance to any third-generation cephalosporin or carbapenem.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested.	N/A
	Fluoroquinolone resistance	Yes – isolates from invasive infections only. Isolates from other sites – resistance to be confirmed by diagnostic laboratory only.	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested.	
<i>Moraxella catarrhalis</i>	Resistance to any third-generation cephalosporin or fluoroquinolone.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested.	N/A
Organisms or antibiotics for which there are no EUCAST clinical breakpoints	N/A	Yes – isolates from invasive infections only. Isolates from other sites – refer to EUCAST guidelines for performing susceptibility testing on organisms or agents for which there are no EUCAST breakpoints.		Please contact AMRHAI if you require assistance with interpreting your MIC values

Note 1: Confirmation of resistance will be performed on isolates from clinical sites only.

Note 2: at the time of writing our real-time PCR screens for carbapenemase genes belonging to class A (KPC, IMI, GES, FRI, SME), class B (NDM, VIM, IMP, DIM, GIM, SIM and SPM) and class D (OXA-48-like, OXA-23-like, OXA-40-like, OXA-51-like and OXA-58-like), and ESBL genes that may be associated with ceftolozane/tazobactam resistance in *P. aeruginosa* (GES, PER and VEB).

Table 2. Exceptional resistance phenotypes in Gram-positive bacteria

Organism	Antimicrobial resistance phenotype confirmed by diagnostic laboratory [note 1]	Should this isolate be sent to AMRHAI?	Tests to be provided by AMRHAI [note 2]	Further information
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	Any resistance to vancomycin, teicoplanin, dalbavancin, oritavancin, daptomycin, linezolid, tedizolid, quinupristin-dalfopristin, tigecycline or eravacycline.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested. Molecular screening for linezolid or tedizolid resistance mechanisms where appropriate.	Do not send isolates for determination of heteroresistance to glycopeptides (GISA, hVISA, VISA). Please contact the Specialist Antimicrobial Chemotherapy Unit, Cardiff to discuss testing.
	Oxacillin MIC 2 to 8 mg/L, ceftiofur MIC >4 mg/L or a discrepancy between oxacillin and ceftiofur.	Yes	Confirmation of ceftiofur resistance.	EUCAST recommends the use of ceftiofur rather than oxacillin for MRSA screening as the specificity of oxacillin is lower than that of ceftiofur.
Coagulase-negative staphylococci	Any resistance to vancomycin (but not to teicoplanin alone), dalbavancin, oritavancin, daptomycin (MIC above ECOFF for species), linezolid, tedizolid, quinupristin-dalfopristin, tigecycline or eravacycline.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested. Molecular screening for linezolid or tedizolid resistance mechanisms where appropriate.	Resistance to teicoplanin but not to vancomycin is not exceptional in coagulase-negative staphylococci and does not warrant referral to AMRHAI.
Enterococci	Ampicillin or penicillin resistance in <i>E. faecalis</i> . Any non-wildtype isolates with elevated MICs of daptomycin (<i>E. faecalis</i> : MIC >4 mg/L; <i>E. faecium</i> : MIC >8 mg/L), tigecycline, eravacycline, linezolid or tedizolid. Resistance to teicoplanin but not vancomycin. Enterococci exhibiting unusual resistance to teicoplanin while remaining susceptible to vancomycin.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested. Molecular screening for linezolid or tedizolid resistance mechanisms where appropriate.	Do not send suspected VRE for confirmation of glycopeptide resistance. These can be detected by disc or automated methods and do not require confirmation by AMRHAI.
<i>Streptococcus pneumoniae</i>	Any resistance to carbapenems, vancomycin, teicoplanin, dalbavancin, daptomycin, linezolid, tedizolid, quinupristin, dalfopristin, tigecycline, eravacycline or rifampicin.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested.	We no longer seek referral of isolates exhibiting resistance to penicillin or third-generation cephalosporins.
	Fluoroquinolone resistance in respiratory isolates.	No: confirmation by diagnostic laboratory only.	N/A	N/A
Streptococci (groups A, B, C and G, β -haemolytic)	Resistance to penicillin (groups A, C and G, MIC $\geq$ 0.03 mg/L; group B, MIC >0.125 mg/L), cephalosporins, vancomycin, teicoplanin, dalbavancin, daptomycin, linezolid, tedizolid, quinupristin-dalfopristin, tigecycline or eravacycline.	Yes	Confirmation of resistance; testing of alternative agents if requested. Molecular screening for linezolid or tedizolid resistance mechanisms where appropriate.	
<i>Corynebacterium</i> spp.	Resistance to vancomycin, teicoplanin, dalbavancin, daptomycin, linezolid, tedizolid, quinupristin-dalfopristin or tigecycline.	No: confirmed by diagnostic laboratory only. Refer to AMRHAI only for testing of alternative agents.	N/A	N/A

Organisms for which there are no EUCAST clinical breakpoints	N/A	Yes: isolates from invasive infections only. Isolates from other sites - refer to EUCAST guidelines for performing susceptibility testing on organisms or agents for which there are no EUCAST breakpoints.		Please contact AMRHAi if you require assistance with interpreting your MIC values.
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Note 1: Not all agents may currently be routinely tested by diagnostic laboratories.
Note 2: Confirmation of resistance will be performed on isolates from clinical sites only.

Table 3. Antibiotics tested by broth microdilution

Bacterial genus	Antibiotics tested by broth microdilution	
Enterobacterales	Amikacin Ampicillin amoxicillin/clavulanate aztreonam aztreonam/avibactam Cefepime cefotaxime ceftazidime ceftazidime/avibactam ceftolozane/tazobactam	ciprofloxacin colistin gentamicin imipenem ertapenem meropenem piperacillin/tazobactam temocillin tigecycline
<i>Acinetobacter</i> spp.	Amikacin colistin ciprofloxacin gentamicin	imipenem meropenem tigecycline
<i>Pseudomonas</i> spp.	Amikacin aztreonam Cefepime ceftazidime ceftolozane/tazobactam ceftazidime/avibactam	ciprofloxacin gentamicin colistin imipenem meropenem piperacillin/tazobactam
staphylococci	Cefoxitin clindamycin erythromycin daptomycin fusidic acid levofloxacin	gentamicin linezolid rifampicin teicoplanin vancomycin oritavancin (not part of standard panel) [note 1]
enterococci	ampicillin daptomycin gentamicin	linezolid teicoplanin vancomycin oritavancin (not part of standard panel) [note 1]

Note 1: the broth microdilution assay for determination of oritavancin MIC currently falls outside the scope of accreditation under ISO 15189.

Therapeutic guidance

By determining MICs of appropriate antibiotics for submitted isolates, AMRHAI aims to elucidate the most suitable options for treatment. To evaluate susceptibility, we use published clinical breakpoints. In their absence, we can advise on the interpretation of locally-determined susceptibility testing results and the best evidence for any potential antibiotic treatment on a pharmacological basis and/or published evidence (see [EUCAST guidance for susceptibility testing of organisms or agents for which there are no EUCAST breakpoints](#)).

Where multi-resistant isolates are submitted for therapeutic guidance, susceptibilities already established by the sender should be recorded on the submission form, along with appropriate clinical details. Any significant resistance mechanisms relevant to treatment will be interpreted from MIC profiles and reported. In addition, we also undertake interpretation of hospital laboratory data on the telephone when there is an urgency.

Given the primary role of a reference laboratory is to support national epidemic intelligence and not to provide a confirmatory diagnostic service, colleagues are reminded that the results generated by AMRHAI may not always be generated in a clinically useful time for individual case management.

Endocarditis and *Pseudomonas* spp. from CF patients

AMRHAI determines MICs for endocarditis isolates to provide therapeutic guidance, as some laboratories choose not to maintain MIC testing capacity. To maximise the speed of our response, submission forms must be clearly marked 'ENDOCARDITIS'. Similarly, AMRHAI determines MICs for *Pseudomonas* spp. from CF patients. Since this work does not usually entail investigating exceptional resistance, it is chargeable.

Molecular investigation of resistance

Genes and mutations sought are those that confer resistance to agents of last resort, including carbapenems, colistin and linezolid. Molecular investigation of colistin and linezolid resistance are uncharged reference services to NHS laboratories. However, NHS laboratories will be charged for CPE confirmation unless screening for the 'big 4' carbapenemase families (KPC, OXA-48-like, NDM and VIM) has been performed locally prior to referral to AMRHAI; there are now many commercial diagnostic tests available to undertake this work. We strongly recommend implementation of a molecular or immunochromatographic assay locally, where rapid testing will have maximal impact on individual patient management. UKHSA publishes guidance to provide the evidence base to support diagnostic laboratories in making an informed choice on the implementation of commercially available carbapenemase detection assays when considering local business needs.

Services currently offered include the detection of:

- 23S rRNA mutations and plasmid-mediated genes responsible for oxazolidinone resistance in enterococci, staphylococci or streptococci
- genes encoding acquired carbapenemases in *Acinetobacter* spp., *Enterobacterales* or *Pseudomonas* spp. plasmid-mediated genes responsible for colistin resistance in Enterobacterales, *Acinetobacter* spp. or *Pseudomonas* spp.

We use whole-genome sequencing to screen for additional oxazolidinone and carbapenem resistance mechanisms in isolates negative by PCR, and for plasmid-mediated genes responsible for colistin resistance; this testing currently falls outside the scope of accreditation under ISO 15189.

[Table 4](#) summarises carbapenemase gene families that are targeted using our reference service PCR. Where an 'exceptional' carbapenemase and species combination result (cells without a ¥ symbol in [Table 4](#)) has been identified, or where an unusual organism has been identified with an acquired carbapenemase (that is, any bacterial genera other than a member of the Enterobacterales, *Pseudomonas* spp. or *Acinetobacter* spp.), isolates should be sent to the AMRHAI Reference Unit for confirmation.

New antibiotics

AMRHAI liaises with pharmaceutical companies to test new antibiotics against representative or unusually resistant referred isolates, possibly revealing new treatment options. This is undertaken as contracted research. For enquiries, please contact AMRHAI.evaluations@ukhsa.gov.uk

New diagnostics

AMRHAI liaises with diagnostics companies to test new kits and platforms against representative or unusually resistant referred isolates. This is undertaken as contracted research. For enquiries, please contact AMRHAI.evaluations@ukhsa.gov.uk

Surveys of resistance

Point prevalence surveys of antibiotic resistance are undertaken, giving measures of the extent and nature of critical resistance problems.

Table 4. Distribution of carbapenemase genes covered by AMRHAI Reference Unit PCR (based on AMRHAI data)

Carbapenemase gene family	Associated with common 'host' organism		
	Enterobacterales	<i>Pseudomonas</i> spp.	<i>Acinetobacter</i> spp.
KPC	¥	<10 ^D	<10 ^D
OXA-48-like	¥	<50 ^E	0
NDM	¥	¥	¥
VIM	¥	¥	<10 ^D
IMP	¥	¥	¥
IMI/NMC-A	¥ ^B	0	0
GES	¥	¥	<10 ^D
FRI	<10 ^D	0	0
SME	¥ ^C	0	0
DIM	0	<50 ^E	0
GIM	<10 ^D	<10 ^D	0
SIM	0	<10 ^D	0
SPM	0	<10 ^D	0
OXA-23-like	<50 ^E	0	¥
OXA-40-like	0	0	¥
OXA-51-like ^A	0	0	¥
OXA-58-like	0	0	¥

Key

¥ = combinations of mechanism and species would not be considered as exceptional.

A = intrinsic to *A. baumannii* and only expressed when associated with an insertion element.

B = almost exclusively reported in *Enterobacter* spp. with less than a handful of reports in other genera.

C = reported only in *Serratia marcescens*.

D = fewer than 10 in total ever identified by the AMRHAI Reference Unit.

E = fewer than 50 in total ever identified by the AMRHAI Reference Unit

Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit (GBRU)

[Staff contact details.](#)

GBRU provides a national reference facility for bacteria causing gastrointestinal infections. The unit also provides the national reference facility for the epidemiological typing and toxin testing for a range of Gram-positive bacteria associated with foodborne infection and intoxication.

GBRU is required to notify the appropriate Environmental Health Officer, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control and all other relevant people. Notification will be through a designated, competent senior member of staff.

Bacillus, Clostridia and Listeria

Bacillus species

Identification of *Bacillus* species by MALDI-TOF, other than *B. anthracis*, and molecular typing of *Bacillus* isolates associated with foodborne outbreaks and other healthcare associated incidents.

Samples or specimens to send are pure cultures of *Bacillus* on agar slopes isolated from:

- vomitus, faeces or foods suspected to be or linked with cases of food poisoning
- isolates from blood cultures, or from sites that are normally sterile, or other sites where invasive or other diseases are confirmed or suspected
- clinical and environmental sources where cross-infection is suspected
- foods or beverages with levels of *Bacillus* species including *B. cereus* of $\geq 10^4$ cfu per g or mL
- food environment sources
- as foods may be contaminated simultaneously with several species of *Bacillus* a selection of different colonial types should be sent

Please fill in the correct request form in full including:

- your address
- your telephone number
- your specimen or sample reference number
- specimen or sample details
- your presumptive identification of the isolate together with the testing you require

Brief clinical and epidemiological information including patient details should be included with cultures from cases of infection.

Clostridium botulinum

Diagnostic service for botulism includes the detection of botulinum neurotoxin and PCR detection and isolation of *Clostridium botulinum* from clinical specimens, food and environmental samples associated with suspected cases of botulism.

There are 5 routes by which botulism can arise in humans: foodborne, intestinal colonisation, wound, accidental or deliberate. Details on clinical presentation, diagnosis and laboratory tests for *C. botulinum* are available on the UKHSA website.

- [Botulism: clinical and public health management](#)

Antitoxin for treatment is available on request through the Colindale Duty Doctor System (24 hours telephone: 020 8200 4400) for treatment of foodborne and wound botulism. Advice on treatment and prevention of infant botulism can also be obtained through the Duty Doctor System or from the Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Programme, California Department of Health.

Suspected cases of all forms of botulism should be discussed with the Botulism service at Colindale (Dr Gauri Godbole 0782 6859642 and the Colindale Duty Doctor out of hours (0208 200 4400).

The service will also discuss and ensure that the most appropriate samples are taken and sent under optimal conditions. Specimens should be sent immediately to the reference laboratory and GBRU notified of their arrival so that necessary preparations for testing can be made.

Specimens or samples to send include:

- 10g or 10mL of suspected food and drink samples (refrigerated). Please contact lab of shipping condition for food samples
- serum – at least 5mL to be collected as close to the onset of symptoms as possible (within 2 days) and before antitoxin is given – lysed or EDTA treated blood specimens are not suitable
- faeces – 10g faeces or rectal wash out for toxin detection and a pea-sized portion inoculated into cooked meat broth or other anaerobic media for rapid PCR detection and isolation of *C. botulinum*
- vomitus, gastric washings or gut content – at least 10g in a sterile container
- pus or debrided tissue – to be placed as soon as possible into cooked meat broth or other anaerobic culture medium
- post-mortem specimens such as heart blood if not haemolysed – specimens of faeces, gut contents or infected wounds may be useful

- all pure cultures suspected of being *C. botulinum* should be sent in a cooked meat medium using as category A transport

Please complete the correct request form in full including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details or food (sample) details including your reference number, major patient symptoms, recent travel history, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require. Brief clinical and epidemiological information should be included. If botulism is suspected, by any route, it is essential that the local CCDC is notified immediately. Please also notify the Microbiology Services Colindale, Duty Doctor (020 8200 4400).

Emergency situations

During working hours contact a senior member of staff for appropriate urgent attention. Outside working hours, contact the Colindale Duty Doctor (020 8200 4400). Urgent transport of samples to GBRU by courier should be considered if a clinical diagnosis of food botulism is suspected.

Turnaround time

The turnaround times for the detection and identification of *C. botulinum* are shown in calendar days and reflect the proportion of tests requiring prolonged observation in order to establish a negative result.

The variable turnaround time for food testing reflects, prior to testing, the microbiological confirmation of botulism in patients associated with the food and the emergency of the situation. The variability in the turnaround time also reflects the lengthier procedure for food associated with confirmed cases of infant botulism.

The turnaround time for the detection of neurotoxin will vary depending on decision for testing: the use of the bioassay is restricted by the Home Office and depends on the level of clinical suspicion of botulism in the patient, the adequacy of the specimens and the availability, prior testing of other specimens by culture and PCR. Therefore, it is recommended to contact GBRU with a complete clinical history before submitting samples to make sure that the most appropriate samples are sent in order to maximise the likelihood of detecting the toxin if present. When performed, the bioassay test takes 5 days to complete. If neurotoxin is detected, more than 5 days is required to confirm and establish the toxin type.

Depending on the emergency of the situation, intermediate and final results are communicated to the clinician prior release of the final reports.

For further information or for tests requiring urgent attention, please contact the appropriate member of staff.

Clostridium perfringens

Identification of *C. perfringens* toxin genes in cultures, typing of enterotoxigenic *C. perfringens*, and the detection of *C. perfringens* enterotoxin in faeces. Specimens or samples to send are: Pure cultures of *C. perfringens* in anaerobic broth isolated from:

- faeces from cases of diarrhoea obtained after alcohol shock treatment or on direct isolation
- faeces, gut contents or gut biopsy in cases of suspected necrotising enterocolitis
- foods
- for samples associated with an outbreak, it is recommended that at least three colonies are picked and sent, each in a separate CMB.

Faeces for enterotoxin detection in cases of diarrhoea:

- minimum sample at least 1g or at least 1mL collected within 3 days from onset of symptoms
- in cases of suspected necrotising enterocolitis: faeces or gut contents

Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details including your reference number (ILOG, HPZ or CIMS number), major patient symptoms, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require. Brief clinical and epidemiological information should be included from cases of *C. perfringens* diarrhoea in particular the date of onset of symptoms. Please indicate if a relationship with other cases by common source is suspected and if the cases are suspected to be food-borne or as a result of person to person spread.

Molecular typing by WGS is performed on isolates of *C. perfringens* submitted to GBRU to assist in outbreak investigations.

Clostridium tetani

Diagnostic of tetanus in humans is by the detection of neurotoxigenic *C. tetani* by cultures and PCR from pure culture or from debrided tissues or pus.

Samples or specimens to send are:

- pure cultures suspected to be *C. tetani* in an anaerobic broth
- tissue to be placed into an anaerobic broth

Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details and your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require. Brief clinical and epidemiological information should be included with cultures/specimens from cases of infection.

Listeria

Identification of *Listeria* species and typing of *L. monocytogenes* isolates by WGS. The samples to send are pure cultures on agar slope isolated from:

- all cases of human listeriosis should be sent for typing, with all reports incorporated into a database for national surveillance of listeriosis

- from foods and the environment – these cultures should be sent for typing including in the following circumstances:
 - if the isolates form part of a coordinated survey or follow up investigation
 - if there is a concern with a specific food product
 - if there is an association with a case of listeriosis

Foods may be contaminated simultaneously by several species of *Listeria*, or several strains of *L. monocytogenes*, multiple (ideally 3 to 5) subcultures should therefore be examined for each sample.

GBRU offers a service for the identification of *Listeria* species, and this may be helpful when laboratories are experiencing difficulties in this area. Isolates of *Listeria* species other than *L. monocytogenes* where these are present at high numbers in food should also be sent. Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details and your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require. Brief clinical and epidemiological information should be included with cultures from cases of human listeriosis. A more detailed surveillance questionnaire for completion will be sent for each case.

Molecular typing by WGS is performed on all isolates of *L. monocytogenes* submitted to the GBRU for surveillance purposes and to assist in outbreak investigations.

Campylobacter and Helicobacter

Campylobacter

The specimens or samples to send include:

- pure culture sent on Amies charcoal swab (preferably) or other suitable media (for example, blood or chocolate agar slope)
- it is advisable to pick *Campylobacter* isolates from a non-selective medium to minimise overgrowth by contaminants – if an overnight delay before posting is anticipated, then the isolate should be stored at 4°C

Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details and your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, recent travel history, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require.

For further guidance on the symptoms, diagnosis, management, susceptibility testing and epidemiology of campylobacter see [Campylobacter: guidance, data and analysis](#).

Please note we do not provide a serodiagnostic service for *Campylobacter*. Preston Microbiology Services offer *Campylobacter* serology testing (telephone: 01772 522100). GBRU will impose a handling charge for dealing with such requests.

Helicobacter pylori (charged service)

The specimens or samples to send include:

1. *H. pylori* cultures: should be harvested from a 48 to 72-hour culture – a heavy suspension (visibly cloudy) should be prepared in either a suitable *H. pylori* transport medium or sterile saline and should be sent to our laboratory for testing as soon as possible after harvesting.
2. Gastric biopsy specimens for isolation of *H. pylori*: should be sent to our laboratory for testing without delay, preferably within 24 hours. Those gastric biopsy specimens received without a given collection date or, with a collection date that is ≥ 4 days from receipt into our laboratory will only be tested by PCR. Biopsies should be sent in a suitable *H. pylori* transport medium or alternatively, in sterile saline. If a biopsy is not posted or couriered on the day of receipt in your laboratory, then please store at 4°C. Drying and exposure to air or oxygen easily kills *Helicobacter* spp.

Note: Do not put biopsies into a histological cassette as they cannot be safely opened in our laboratory. Any biopsies that are received in a histological cassette will be reported as 'not examined'.

Instructions to optimise the growth of *Helicobacter* spp. from gastric biopsy material.

1. Perform multiple gastric biopsies (5 to 6), at least 2 from the antrum and 2 from the anterior and posterior corpus respectively.
2. Larger volumes increase the yield.
3. All microbiology specimens should be taken with sterile forceps before the histology specimens are taken to reduce risk of contamination.
4. There is a risk with pooling biopsy specimens that the organism may not be isolated if any contaminating microbial flora from one biopsy cross contaminates others.
5. Endoscopic biopsies should be performed in the middle of the week (avoid Fridays) and sent via courier or Dx within 24 hours to the Gastrointestinal Bacteria Reference Unit Colindale.
6. Have treatment-free interval before biopsy, at least 2 weeks off PPI and 4 weeks off antibiotics.
7. Failure to isolate *H. pylori* from gastric biopsy specimens may be due to the late receipt of the sample with respect to the collection date. To maximise the likelihood of recovering viable *H. pylori* from gastric biopsies for phenotypic susceptibility testing, samples should be sent to our laboratory without delay, preferably so that they can be received by us within 24 hours following collection from the patient.

Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details and your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, recent travel history, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require.

We do not provide a serodiagnostic service for *Helicobacter*. GBRU will impose a handling charge for dealing with such requests.

***Escherichia coli*, shigella, vibrio, yersinia**

Escherichia coli

A primary diagnostic service for the detection of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) in faeces from cases where there is a clinical suspicion of STEC infection, including haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS). For the diagnosis of STEC-HUS, if STEC PCR is not available at the local or regional hospital diagnostic laboratory, a faecal specimen (or rectal swab if a faecal specimen is not available) should be rapidly referred to GBRU, as early in the care pathway as possible and before administering antibiotics.

Services offered include:

- species identification of the genus *Escherichia*
- *E. coli* serotyping
- typing of STEC O157 by whole genome sequencing
- detection of Shiga toxin (stx) genes by PCR
- identification by PCR of virulence genes in STEC and in strains that may belong to other groups of *E. coli*-associated with diarrhoeal illness – this enterovirulent *E. coli* includes enteropathogenic (EPEC), enteroaggregative (EAEC), enterotoxigenic (ETEC), enteroinvasive (EIEC)
- testing of faecal samples for STEC and, by arrangement, other enterovirulent *E. coli*

The specimens or samples to send include:

- pure culture on Dorset's Egg or Nutrient agar slopes
- faecal sample in an appropriate standard container with an inner seal, and should be more than 1 gram but not overfilled

When submitting a culture to GBRU please pick from a non-selective medium or check the purity before sending. Submitting a pure culture significantly reduces sample processing time.

Please complete the correct request form including your address and telephone number, patient (specimen) details and your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, recent travel history, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require. If you have any reason to suspect that the agent being submitted is an ACDP HG3, please indicate this clearly on form.

Shigella, vibrio and yersinia species

Services offered include:

- species identification of the genus *Shigella*
- serotyping of *Sh. dysenteriae*, *Sh. flexneri* and *Sh. boydii*
- molecular typing of *Sh. sonnei*, *Sh. dysenteriae*, *Sh. flexneri* and *Sh. boydii*
- species identification of the genus *Yersinia* (excluding *Yersinia pestis*) as Porton Down is the reference lab for *Yersinia pestis*, not Colindale
- species identification of the genus *Vibrio* (including *Aeromonas* spp. and *Plesiomonas shigelloides*)
- *V. cholerae* serotyping

The specimens or samples to send include:

- pure culture on Dorset's Egg or Nutrient agar slopes

When submitting a culture to GBRU please pick from a non-selective medium or check the purity before sending. Submitting a pure culture significantly reduces sample processing time.

Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details, your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, recent travel history, your identification of the isolate and what testing you require.

Salmonella

Services offered include:

- GS of all *Salmonella* species providing sequence type and inferred serovar
- analysis of WGS data to support outbreak investigations
- investigation of the genetic basis of antibiotic resistance in enteric bacteria

The samples to send include:

- suspect *Salmonella* cultures should be submitted on nutrient agar or Dorset egg
- slopes in screw-capped containers
- urgent submissions: advise the relevant contacts by telephone of any urgent specimen that is being dispatched to GBRU

Please complete the correct request form including your address, telephone number, patient (specimen) details, your specimen reference number, major patient symptoms, recent travel history and your identification of the isolate including the hazard group and what testing you require.

Respiratory and Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Reference Unit (RVPBRU)

Staff contact details.

The unit is happy to discuss and advise on any clinical or epidemiological problems and outbreak investigations. Contact the section head in the first instance.

Specimen submissions regarded by the sending laboratory as especially important or urgent should be notified to the Unit by telephone to ensure that the appropriate level of priority is accorded to these specimens immediately upon receipt.

Turnaround times will vary depending on the nature of the enquiry and the complexity of the investigation required. Priority will always be given to outbreak associated isolates. Where services are offered as reference services (that is, free of charge) for customers in England and Wales, they are offered on the assumption that the primary diagnostic work has been undertaken already. Evidence of such primary testing should be noted on the specimen request form, or a charge will be levied.

Zoonotic and Acute Respiratory Section (ZARS)

Legionella

A range of reference and confirmatory tests useful in the investigation of individual cases and outbreaks of legionella infection.

The laboratory works very closely with the colleagues responsible for national surveillance and reports all clinically relevant results to them. For national surveillance of Legionnaires' disease contact legionella@ukhsa.gov.uk

If samples are submitted as part of an outbreak or incident investigation, please ensure this is made clear on the request form and the relevant health protection team is identified.

Legionella pneumophila sgp 1 urinary antigen detection

The laboratory encourages and requests the submission of all urine specimens for reference and confirmatory testing which have been found to be positive, equivocal or unexpectedly negative using commercially available L. pneumophila urinary antigen kits. We will perform a commercial EIA assay with boiled and unboiled urine sample to enable the confirmation of the submitting laboratory's findings.

See guidance on [Referral of specimens for confirmation of Legionnaires' disease](#).

Please supply details of the assay used and results obtained from primary testing otherwise you will be charged for these tests.

Legionella genome detection and culture from clinical material

These services are provided to assist in the investigation of outbreaks of legionella infection and other incidents of potential public health significance. Submission of any lower respiratory tract samples from all *L. pneumophila* urinary antigen positive, PCR positive or culture positive patients is particularly encouraged as such samples are likely to yield useful epidemiological typing data. Lower respiratory tract specimens from urine antigen test positive patients taken within 2 days of admission are more likely to be positive by isolation molecular detection and yield typing data.

Respiratory specimens will be tested by qPCR and culture. However, these services are not offered for primary diagnosis unless part of an HPT led investigation. In exceptional circumstances *L. pneumophila* PCR and culture may be requested as a referred (charged) service after discussion and agreement with the laboratory.

The most commonly referred specimens are sputum and bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL), though the laboratory is pleased to receive other clinical specimens for examination from patients with other evidence of legionella infection.

Please supply details of the assay used and results obtained from primary testing.

Legionella species detection including *L. longbeachae*

Culture and attempted molecular detection (from urinary antigen negative, intensive care, contact with horticultural growth medium in 14 days prior to onset, pneumococci urine or routine respiratory pathogen screen negative patients only).

Identification and epidemiological typing of legionella isolates

The laboratory encourages submission of all legionellae isolated from clinical material for confirmation and national surveillance purposes. We are also happy to receive any putative legionella isolate from clinical and other sources which is of public health significance.

Identification is made by nutritional characteristics and genotypic methods. Specialised typing methodologies including monoclonal antibody subgrouping and DNA-sequence based typing are available as part of epidemiological investigations or, when appropriate, after discussion with the laboratory.

Please supply details of the assay used and results obtained from primary testing.

Mycoplasma and ureaplasma

ZARS offers confirmatory and referred services useful in the investigation of individual cases and outbreaks of mycoplasma and ureaplasma infection. These are genome detection and/or culture from clinical material and identification of referred isolates.

Quick list of services

Target	Test	Preferred specimen	Minimum sample volume
<i>M. pneumoniae</i>	PCR and determination of point mutations associated with macrolide resistance.	Respiratory sample (LRT or throat swab) Positive DNA extract.	0.2mL 0.1mL
Neonate screen: <i>M. hominis</i> or <i>Ureaplasma</i> spp.	PCR with culture on PCR positives.	ETS, NPA	0.2mL
Isolates	Culture, PCR and sequencing when relevant.	Culture on blood agar or in transport medium [note 1].	N/A

Note 1: for culture, please use transport medium for respiratory Chlamydia, mycoplasmas and ureaplasmas (for example, VCM) and not viral transport medium (for example, VTM) as not suitable.

The detection of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* DNA in clinical samples

The unit provides a (charged) *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* primary diagnostic service and a (free of charge) service for confirmation of infection on samples tested positive locally and for identification of presumptive mycoplasma isolates. Reference laboratory confirmatory diagnosis and macrolide resistance testing is provided free of charge.

See guidance on [Mycoplasma pneumoniae: referral of samples](#).

The presence of *M. pneumoniae* DNA in clinical material taken from an acutely ill patient is determined by using a PCR directed against the P1 adhesin gene. Any respiratory specimen is suitable for this test, preferably a lower respiratory tract (LRT) specimen or throat swab.

DNA extracts from known PCR positives are tested for determination of point mutations associated with macrolide resistance for surveillance data.

CSF samples are rarely, if ever, positive for *M. pneumoniae* and are therefore not routinely tested for *M. pneumoniae* DNA.

Mycoplasma or Ureaplasma from clinical material

This referred (charged) service is not intended for the routine investigation of respiratory illness but is available where mycoplasma infection is of increased likelihood or would be of major clinical significance.

Mycoplasma and Ureaplasmas may cause respiratory and other infections in the immunocompromised. Respiratory specimens from such patients are suitable for investigation. Mycoplasmas have occasionally been isolated from other extra-pulmonary sites including CSF, blood cultures, wound and joint aspirates. The presence of mycoplasmas will be determined using PCR, sequencing and culture when relevant for all human and zoonotic mollicute species except haemoplasmas.

Relevant PCR, sequencing and culture results will be available dependant on the organism in question. Culture results will be available ASAP following successful isolation. Some species such as *M. hominis* take only a few days while others such as *M. pirum* may take as long as 6 weeks to isolate.

Neonate screen

U. urealyticum, *U. parvum* and *M. hominis*, may be involved in respiratory infection or rarely meningitis or septicaemia in neonates, especially low birth weight infants. The presence of *U. urealyticum*, *U. parvum* and *M. hominis* DNA in clinical material is determined using PCR amplifying the urease gene in ureaplasmas with species-specific probes (Yi and others, 2005) and the glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (gap) gene in *M. hominis* (adaption of Baczynska and others, 2004 with a house probe design). Culture will be attempted on all PCR positive specimens.

Requests for Antimicrobial susceptibility testing for *Mycoplasma hominis* and Ureaplasma cultures will be forwarded to and reported by Division of Infection and Immunity, School of Medicine, Cardiff University.

Detection in genital specimens of *U. urealyticum*, *U. parvum* and *M. hominis* is not undertaken.

The identification of putative isolates of mycoplasmas and ureaplasmas

This reference service is undertaken by molecular methods including 16S rDNA sequencing. The laboratory is pleased to receive any putative isolates from clinical material. The most frequently referred species include *M. hominis*, *U. urealyticum*, *U. parvum* and *M. pneumoniae*.

Priority will always be given to isolates of current clinical relevance.

Respiratory chlamydiae

The unit can provide a reference service for chlamydia DNA detection by PCR, which may be useful in the investigation of potential outbreaks of respiratory chlamydia infections. This service is only offered where there is a clear public health need to establish the diagnosis.

Please contact the laboratory to discuss before sending any samples. For the occasional non-respiratory sample (when a respiratory sample is not available) we will report it as 'this is not an optimal sample type, as it has not been validated against this PCR assay'.

Vaccine Preventable Bacteria Section (VPBS)

Bordetella pertussis and *Bordetella* spp.

The VPBS offers a range of reference, enhanced surveillance, and referred tests useful in the investigation of individual cases and outbreaks of pertussis infection. These are serology, identification and, where appropriate, phenotypic and genotypic characterisation of isolates, including other *Bordetella* spp.

The laboratory works very closely with the Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division, Colindale, and reports all clinically relevant results to them. National surveillance of pertussis is led by Dr Gayatri Amirthalingam and Dr Helen Campbell, who can be contacted via the switchboard (0208 200 4400).

[Pertussis: guidelines for public health management](#) provides guidance on the public health management of pertussis (whooping cough).

Bordetella pertussis serology

The laboratory offers a referred (charged for) serological service for the diagnosis of pertussis. Anti-pertussis toxin (PT) IgG antibody levels are determined using an in-house EIA.

This service is offered where the following criterion is met:

- single samples taken more than 2 weeks after onset of cough for any individuals with a history of prolonged cough

Note: this service is **not** suitable for assessment of immune status as there are no agreed correlates of protection for anti-PT IgG.

Bordetella pertussis oral fluid antibody testing

The laboratory offers a service testing for anti-pertussis toxin (PT) IgG antibody levels in oral fluid samples using an in-house EIA, for the diagnosis of pertussis and for national surveillance, as an alternative to serology testing.

This service is offered where the following criteria are met - patients must be aged between 2 and <17 years of age and their local health protection team must be notified of the clinical suspicion of pertussis by their GP in order for the patient to be sent an oral fluid testing kit. The patient takes their own oral fluid sample (≥ 2 weeks after onset of cough) and posts it (in a prepaid envelope) directly to the Unit.

Further characterisation of *Bordetella pertussis* isolates

The laboratory is pleased to receive putative isolates of *Bordetella* spp. from any human source. These will be fully characterised by a range of phenotypic and genotypic methods.

Streptococcus pneumoniae identification and capsular typing of pneumococci

We request submission of **all** *S. pneumoniae* isolates from blood, CSF and other normally sterile sites from episodes of invasive disease for confirmation of identity and capsule serotyping by whole genome sequencing (WGS), and phenotypic methods in a small number of cases when required, as part of the national surveillance function of our laboratory. Results of pneumococcal capsule typing are shared with the Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division, Colindale and contribute to National Surveillance.

Presently available and likely future pneumococcal vaccines contain specific, generally common, capsular polysaccharide antigens. For this reason, it is important to monitor the capsular type distribution of isolates from invasive disease in both adults and children. Capsular typing of pneumococci may also be helpful in the investigation of instances of suspected cross-infection in hospitals, other residential institutions, and day care centres (or similar) for children.

The unit liaises closely with the AMRHA in studies of antibiotic-resistant pneumococci.

Other information

There are currently at least 92 distinct pneumococcal capsular polysaccharide serotypes defined by the Danish classification scheme (SSI Diagnostica). Some of the 92-plus serogroups and serotypes may be divided into specific serotypes or subtypes, that is, types carrying the same number but different letters, for example 6A, 6B, 9A, 9L, 9V.

Subtyping is undertaken on all isolates from normally sterile sites, in particular for any episode of systemic infection associated with possible vaccine failure.

The laboratory, together with the Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division, Colindale, are actively following up all cases of invasive pneumococcal disease in the childhood age groups targeted for vaccination in order to ascertain immunisation history and determine vaccine effectiveness. This applies to anyone born after 4 September 2004. Typing of isolates to assist in the management of clusters of pneumococcal disease, including non-sterile site isolates can be undertaken. Such requests should be made via the local Health Protection Team or contact RVPBRU.

We do not offer a reference service for typing of *Streptococcus pneumoniae* strains from non-invasive infections. Unless part of an investigation as described above, non-invasive isolates of *S. pneumoniae* (for example, isolates from eye swabs or sputum) will not normally be tested or can be tested as a charged test.

Where capsular typing of non-invasive pneumococci may be helpful in the investigation of instances of suspected cross-infection in hospitals, other residential institutions, and day care centres (or similar) for children please contact the health protection team and discuss with Senior RVPBRU staff prior to sending isolates.

If seeking MICs from non-invasive pneumococcal isolates, please refer directly to AMRHA1.

We do not carry out tests for *S. pneumoniae* antibodies in serum. *S. pneumoniae* serology is performed by:

UKHSA Vaccine Evaluation Unit
Manchester Medical Microbiology Partnership Clinical Sciences Building 2
Manchester Royal Infirmary Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9WL
Contact Professor Ray Borrow on 0161 276 6793.

Identification and toxigenicity testing of *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* and other potentially toxigenic corynebacteria

Identification or confirmation and toxigenicity testing of potentially toxigenic corynebacteria (*C. diphtheriae*, *C. ulcerans* and *C. pseudotuberculosis*) is performed initially by real-time PCR (qPCR) on the submitted isolate. Isolates which are qPCR positive for the toxin gene (tox) will also be tested by the Elek test for toxin expression. Although *C. diphtheriae*, *C. ulcerans* and *C. pseudotuberculosis* toxin gene PCR positive results will be confirmed by the Elek test, a toxin gene PCR positive result should be acted upon without waiting for the Elek result. A toxin gene

PCR result of 'not detected' (that is, tox PCR negative) is final and no further toxigenicity testing will be reported on these isolates.

Infections with toxigenic *C. diphtheriae* is very uncommon within the UK and is almost always imported. A travel and immunisation history should always be obtained from suspected cases of diphtheria and, if feasible, their close contacts.

Some strains of *C. ulcerans* (and very rarely *C. pseudotuberculosis*) may produce diphtheria toxin and the illness caused may present as clinical diphtheria. Such infections should be treated as diphtheria with the important proviso that person-to-person transmission is extremely rare. Infection is usually acquired from contact with farm animals or companion animals and/or raw milk.

UK microbiological laboratories are encouraged to submit all clinical isolates of *C. diphtheriae*, *C. ulcerans* and *C. pseudotuberculosis* to RVPBRU in a timely manner for toxigenicity testing and surveillance purposes. The Unit is a designated WHO Collaborating Centre for diphtheria.

Urgent isolates received by midday will usually be processed on the same day (Monday to Saturday) and the qPCR results reported by phone by the end of the day. Under normal circumstances, the Elek test result for isolates positive for the tox gene will also be reported by phone 48 hours later.

Notify RVPBRU (telephone 0208 327 7887) before sending an isolate for toxigenicity testing within working hours on a weekday. Outside these hours, please notify the Colindale duty doctor on 0208 200 4400. If possible, always use the RVPBRU Request Form (R3) and always ensure full contact telephone numbers are provided on the form. PCR testing on Saturdays is an on-call service, so RVPBRU or the duty doctor must be notified ahead of time, and the isolate must arrive on site by midday on Saturday.

Contact the UKHSA Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Colindale team or the duty doctor if considering the use of diphtheria antitoxin (0208 200 4400). They will advise on details of current stock and dosing as suppliers change and dosing is product specific.

Details can be found in the [immunoglobulin handbook](#).

Information on immunisation against infectious diseases can be found in the Green Book and advice is available from the UKHSA Immunisation Lead at immunisation.lead@ukhsa.gov.uk

Please refer to [public health control and management of diphtheria \(in England and Wales\)](#) by the Diphtheria Guidelines Working Group for further details.

Haemophilus influenzae

The laboratory requests submission of all *H. influenzae* isolates from invasive disease (that is, blood, CSF and other normally sterile sites) for confirmation of their identification and capsular serotyping. Serotyping of strains of *H. influenzae* classifies them as one of six types (a to f) or as a non-capsulated (non-typeable) strain.

Conjugate *H. influenzae* serotype b (Hib) vaccine is routinely offered to all infants in the UK. The laboratory requests submission of all *H. influenzae* isolated from blood culture or other normally sterile sites in patients of all ages as part of the surveillance of invasive disease due to *H. influenzae* and for detecting Hib vaccine failures in children. This surveillance is being conducted in collaboration with the Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division, Colindale. Requests for antimicrobial sensitivity testing can be included with submissions.

The laboratory works closely with colleagues in the Immunisation and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Division and are happy to discuss any queries regarding appropriate investigations and actions.

Other information

Identification of *H. influenzae* is based upon X and V factor requirement and a species-specific PCR directed at the ompP2 gene. Serotyping is performed using a combination of slide agglutination using antisera and PCR-based typing. There are 6 capsular serotypes of *H. influenzae* (a to f) based on the capsular polysaccharide of the organisms. Before the introduction of a conjugate vaccine against serotype b (Hib), this serotype caused the majority of serious human infections in the UK. However, other capsular serotypes, notably types a, e and f, and non-capsulated strains can also cause serious infections.

The unit will refer requests for antimicrobial susceptibility testing to AMRHAI.

VPBS does not offer a routine service for typing or susceptibility testing of *H. influenzae* strains from non-invasive infections. Non-invasive isolates of *H. influenzae* (for example, isolates from eye swabs, sputum) will only be examined if there are sound clinical or epidemiological reasons for the investigations. The laboratory is happy to discuss any clinical problem that may warrant further investigation. Requests for antimicrobial susceptibility testing of non-invasive isolates should be made to AMRHAI directly.

We also do not carry out tests for Hib antibodies in serum. Hib serology is performed by: UKHSA Vaccine Evaluation Unit, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Road Manchester M13 9WL, Telephone: 0161 276 6793

Identification of *Haemophilus* species (excluding *Haemophilus ducreyi*)

RVPBRU will confirm the identity of strains of other *Haemophilus* species isolated from cases of invasive disease. For isolates not confirmed as *Haemophilus* spp. a preliminary report will be issued and the isolate forwarded to AMRHAI (BIDS) for full identification, who will issue a report in due course.

Diphtheria immunity

A referred (charged for) service for the determination of serum antibodies to diphtheria toxin.

Diphtheria immunity status is determined by a tissue culture toxin neutralisation assay of serum antibodies specific for diphtheria toxin. Test plates are incubated for up to 6 days before a final report is issued. This assay is more reliable than ELISA, particularly for detecting susceptible individuals.

Results are reported in International Units/mL and classified as:

- individual is susceptible: <0.01 IU/mL
- levels conferring some protection: 0.01 to 0.09 IU/mL
- protective levels: 0.1 to 0.9 IU/mL
- levels conferring long-term protection: >1 IU/mL

Tests are batched and turnaround time may be 3 weeks, unless a sample is deemed to be urgent. Please supply details of vaccination history (if known) with all requests plus relevant clinical details.

Tetanus immunity

A referred (charged for) service for the determination of serum antibodies to tetanus toxin. Tetanus immunity status is determined by an ELISA for serum antibodies specific for tetanus toxin.

Provided serum is collected prior to therapeutic administration of antitoxin, determination of tetanus immunity status may be useful in supporting a clinical diagnosis of tetanus. Absence of detectable antibody or levels below or close to the minimum protective level lends support to the clinical diagnosis while higher levels do not. Please supply details of vaccination history (if known) with all requests plus relevant clinical details.

Results are reported in International Units/mL. Minimum protective level is presently defined as 0.1 IU/mL.

Tests are normally batched and turnaround time may be 3 weeks. If a sample is deemed to be urgent, please contact RVPBRU before sending to discuss.

Sexually Transmitted Infections Reference Laboratory (STIRL)

The [staff contact details](#).

The main activities of STIRL are:

- identification and antibiotic susceptibility testing of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* and *Mycoplasma genitalium* for patient management and national surveillance
- molecular diagnostic service for *Treponema pallidum* (including investigations into congenital syphilis)
- molecular diagnostic service for Lymphogranuloma venereum genovars of *Chlamydia trachomatis*
- molecular diagnostic service for *Haemophilus ducreyi* (outside of ISO15189 scope)
- evaluation of new phenotypic and genotypic methods for investigating AMR in bacterial STIs
- molecular characterisation of strains to inform surveillance, aid outbreak investigations, identify suspect treatment failures and define diagnostic escape variants
- provision of diagnostic, scientific and clinical guidance, and advice

Other new activities that are currently outside the scope of ISO 15189 include:

- development of a partnership between Colindale and UKHSA South West regional laboratory to co-deliver some STI services
- development of antimicrobial susceptibility testing for *Trichomonas vaginalis*

Referral of putative *N. gonorrhoeae* cultures

A reference service is available for isolates that require confirmation of identification because local results were anomalous. All isolates will first be tested by MALDI-ToF MS using the formic acid extraction method. If a good identification to species level cannot be achieved by MALDI-ToF MS (score <2.3), then identification will be supplemented by phenotypic testing and where necessary an *N. gonorrhoeae*-specific PCR. All isolates from non-sexual sites (for example, cases of disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI) and ocular infection) are accepted for confirmation. Since April 2024 DGI has been a reportable infection. Clinicians are requested to report all DGI cases through eNOIDs. Please refer to [UKHSA guidance](#) for further information.

Antimicrobial susceptibility testing of confirmed isolates of *N. gonorrhoeae* with suspected resistance to ceftriaxone (first-line antimicrobial therapy) or from suspected treatment failures is available. Upon special request, we also offer a PCR for the molecular detection of ceftriaxone resistance. Please contact us if you have any molecular specimens that may be from

individuals, or their contacts, with suspected treatment failure or harbouring a gonococcal isolate with suspected or confirmed ceftriaxone resistance.

Note: we no longer seek to confirm *N. gonorrhoeae* with azithromycin resistance. Any isolates received will not be tested and an administration fee charged.

Confirmation of identification for medico-legal purposes

Testing will only commence if STIRL has been contacted in advance and if all paperwork (including the chain of evidence form) is correctly completed – refer to the specimen submission guidelines for more details. Please note that medico-legal processing is not available for isolates which have already been confirmed locally as *N. gonorrhoeae* by 2 different tests.

Typing or whole genome sequencing is not available for medico-legal isolates.

STIRL will accept viable *N. gonorrhoeae* cultures on a chocolate slope or on a VCM swab.

Mycoplasma genitalium

Molecular detection of *M. genitalium* *MgPa* adhesion and *gap* genes, and determination of mutations associated with macrolide resistance by PCR and sequencing. This AMR detection will be undertaken automatically on all clinical specimens found positive for *M. genitalium* – there is no opt-out.

Molecular determination of mutations associated with fluoroquinolone resistance is only available for patients where it is clinically indicated and for those who have failed macrolide and fluoroquinolone treatment – this must be made clear on the referral form. In addition, STIRL may infer possible treatment failure if different samples are received within 2 months and will request fluoroquinolone resistance testing on the referrer's behalf.

STIRL will accept specimens and DNA extracts for *M. genitalium* detection from symptomatic patients, known contacts of cases or for test-of-cure.

Specimens accepted include:

- rectal and genital swabs in unprocessed NAAT swab transport medium (minimum volume 600µL) or as dry swabs. Pharyngeal swabs will be tested but they are an unvalidated sample type and therefore outside of ISO 15189 scope
- urine (minimum volume 3mL)
- extracted DNA (minimum volume 60µL) – ideally only from previously positive specimens as an internal control result may not be available

As per current national guidance in response to the mpox outbreak, all specimens received will be subjected to an inactivation step prior to processing, for further information please contact the STIRL.

Please note, Sanger sequencing of macrolide and fluoroquinolone susceptibility targets is performed by the UKHSA Central Sequencing Laboratory (medical laboratory number 8727) which is accredited to ISO15189:2022.

Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV)

Molecular detection of presence of *Chlamydia trachomatis*, specifically genovars L1, L2 and L3 which are the causative agents of *Lymphogranuloma venereum* (LGV). Specimens are accepted from individuals assigned male at birth (cisgender men and transgender women) and transgender men as standard. Specimens from cisgender women will be accepted for testing only when symptomatic or are direct contacts of confirmed LGV-positive cases. This restriction reflects the current epidemiology of LGV and will be reviewed should this change.

STIRL will accept:

- urine (neat or in NAATs buffer), rectal and genital swabs in NAATs swab buffer or transport medium (minimum volume 600µL) or fresh dry swabs
- biopsy specimens are accepted but are non-validated sample types and therefore outside of ISO15189 accreditation

As per current national guidance in response to the mpox outbreak, all specimens received will be subjected to an inactivation step prior to processing, for further information please contact the STIRL.

Treponema pallidum (syphilis)

Investigations in vertically acquired syphilis

Molecular detection of *Treponema pallidum* the causative agent of syphilis. STIRL will accept:

- ulcer or skin rash swabs in NAATs swab buffer or transport medium (minimum volume 600µL) or fresh dry swabs
- naso-pharyngeal swabs/aspirates, biopsy specimens and CSF specimens are also accepted but are non-validated sample types and therefore outside of ISO15189 accreditation

Note: RPR is the current first-line diagnostic test for CSF. PCR will only be performed on CSF specimens if an RPR result is available. If local RPR testing is unavailable, please forward specimens to:

UKHSA South West Infections Sciences Pathology Sciences building, Southmead Hospital, Bristol BS10 5NB, Telephone: 0117 414 6222, DX 6120200 Bristol 90 BS.

As per current national guidance in response to the mpox outbreak, all specimens received will be subjected to an inactivation step prior to processing, for further information please contact the STIRL.

Investigations into congenital acquired syphilis

STIRL will accept biopsy specimens (both maternal and foetal specimens) from cases of stillbirth for the purpose of investigating the cause of death where syphilis is suspected, based on clinical or histological findings.

Note that biopsy specimens and nasopharyngeal swabs are NOT accredited to the ISO:15189 standard.

Where post-mortem has been declined, STIRL will accept swab specimens (for example, nasopharyngeal swabs from the foetus). The following specimens will be accepted and processed:

- Infant specimens: liver, spleen, lung, nasopharyngeal samples, placental tissues (this is not an exhaustive list)
- Maternal specimens: placental tissues, ulcer swabs and any other appropriate tissue samples

Note the hierarchy of preferred tissue sample types is as follows:

- Fresh tissue, frozen tissue, formalin fixed tissue. Paraffin embedded tissue shavings will be accepted if this is the only material available, however this is likely to reduce the sensitivity of the PCR test (please contact laboratory in advance for discussion prior to referral).

Maternal syphilis serology should be repeated at presentation with a stillbirth. Note: STIRL does not offer a syphilis serology service, any serum specimens for serology services should be processed at local laboratories or referred to the UKHSA South West Laboratory (see above).

When referring specimens for the investigation of congenital syphilis please use the STIRL specific form and provide as much clinical information as possible. [B9: Congenital Syphilis Diagnostic Service referral form](#).

Haemophilus ducreyi (Chancroid)

Molecular detection of *Haemophilus ducreyi* the causative agent of chancroid. Due to the current epidemiology of *H. ducreyi* STIRL have the following criteria for acceptance of specimens for testing:

- infections excluded at requesting laboratory, as far as reasonably practicable: mpox, syphilis, LGV, VZV, HSV
- travel or direct contact of an individual with a travel link outside of Europe, STIRL will accept:
 - ulcer swabs in NAATs swab buffer or transport medium (minimum volume 600µL) or fresh dry swabs

This assay is not ISO15189 accredited.

As per current national guidance in response to the mpox outbreak, all specimens received will be subjected to an inactivation step prior to processing, for further information please contact the STIRL.

Medico-legal processing: *M. genitalium*, LGV and syphilis samples

STIRL will accept specimens for medico-legal processing only with prior notification. Specimens must be accompanied by a completed chain-of-evidence form in addition to the relevant referral form. Please refer to specimen referral guidelines for more information.

Note: charges will be levied for some services. Please contact laboratory for the latest UKHSA price lists.

STIRL also performs surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and investigates molecular epidemiology of bacterial STIs through various programmes and projects. The Gonococcal Resistance to Antimicrobials Surveillance Programme (GRASP).

GRASP is a sentinel surveillance scheme monitoring antimicrobial resistance in *N. gonorrhoeae* across England and Wales, annually. Participating laboratories refer all gonococcal isolates identified over a 2 to 3 month period (usually August to October) to the STIRL for susceptibility testing. Isolates can be referred frozen on Microbank beads (storage in the referring laboratory must be at minus 80°C). Frozen batches will be collected by courier by arrangement). The Mycoplasma genitalium Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance (MARS) was initiated as an annual surveillance programme in 2023. Participating laboratories refer positive *M. genitalium* specimens over a 4 month period (March to June) to STIRL for molecular susceptibility testing.

This study is currently outside of ISO 15189 scope, but please do contact the laboratory if you are interested in participating or require more information.

New antibiotics and diagnostics

STIRL liaises with pharmaceutical and diagnostics companies to test new antibiotics and new assays, respectively. We have a large collection of representative and unusually resistant isolates that can be used for evaluations. All work is undertaken as contracted research

About the UK Health Security Agency

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) prevents, prepares for and responds to infectious diseases, and environmental hazards, to keep all our communities safe, save lives and protect livelihoods. We provide scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability.

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