

20th March 2024

Dear RSC Member Serology Sampling Practice,

URGENT - New focus for serology sampling – fewer adult samples, more samples from children

We are writing to inform you that from Monday 1st April, our serology sampling surveillance will be changing. Our apologies for this very short notice period, but we are having a major shift towards more samples from children as the circulating pathogens change from SARS-CoV-2 to a greater interest in evaluating the routine childhood immunisation programme which is becoming increasingly important following the declines in coverage and increase in vaccine preventable diseases including measles and pertussis.

The work carried out in adults has had a really positive impact on health. Our samples informed about early waning of COVID-19 vaccines in older people, and also about how following an outbreak we were able to confirm that diphtheria immunity in the population was adequate.

We would like to thank practices for the incredible efforts they have put into serology surveillance. We have been averaging almost 5000 samples a month, and mostly in over 65s age group. Your samples made an invaluable contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, as we enter a post-pandemic future, the needs of our collections are changing. Across our network, we are in urgent need to reduce overall sample numbers to 1,500 per month, whilst increasing serology samples from younger age groups (people aged 18 and under).

We will be following up with our high sampling practices in the next few days to discuss steps for bringing sampling in line with our new targets. Unfortunately, we can only fund a restricted number of serology samples from older age groups.

Across the network, we are distributing our sampling by age, and in four groups:

1.	Serology sampling ≤65	500 samples
2.	Serology sampling (adult 18-64 years)	500 samples
3.	Serology sampling (child, 9-17 years)	250 samples
4.	Serology sampling (child, 0-8 years)	250 samples

We will therefore be implementing a cap on samples from older age groups and strongly encourage practices to increase serology sampling among younger age groups.

A reminder that we pay the following for samples taken in under 18s:

- For children and young people aged 9-17 years we are offering £11 per sample taken
- For children aged 0-8 years we are offering £30 per sample taken.

We appreciate that this may be unexpected, and practices may have concerns about a shortfall in remuneration. We can fund paediatric phlebotomy training to encourage sampling from younger age groups. Alternatively, we are happy to discuss other sampling opportunities or research studies that your practice could participate in.

Our plans are to continue with two or three practices per NHS region who would like to conduct adult sampling. We will be looking for those practices to collect around 35 samples per month in the two adult age-bands (a total of 70 samples per month).

It would be great if you could kindly return this letter to the Practice Liaison Team and indicate in the table below which option(s) you would like to continue with. Please can you return your letter to practiceenquiries@phc.ox.ac.uk

Please can you let us know if your practice would like to:

		Please indicate [X]
1.	Continue serology sampling, but at reduced numbers and as one of our 2–3 regional practices	
2.	Stop adult sampling but sporadically sample any children under 18 years	
3	And, if opting for (2) you would also like to receive support with paediatric phlebotomy training	
4.	Stop serology sampling	X
5.	Express interest in biobank research, involving sampling for genomic research	

Our respiratory sampling will continue as now, though rates of sampling may reduce over the summer period.

Thank you for being a member of our surveillance network and contributing samples to our research. We greatly appreciate your continuing collaboration.

Yours faithfully,



Simon de Lusignan
Director, RCGP RSC
Primary Care, Oxford
simon.delusignan@phc.ox.ac.uk



Dr. Gayatri Amirthalingam
Consultant Medical Epidemiologist,
Immunisation & Vaccine Preventable
Diseases, UKHSA Colindale
gayatri.amirthalingam@ukhsa.gov.uk