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**Event:** Changes to Reference (Colindale) and Specialist Microbiology Services during the enhanced COVID-19 incident

**Notified by:** NIS Laboratories - Reference (Colindale)  
NIS Laboratories – Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology Services

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**Background:**

Some of PHE's Reference and Specialist Microbiology laboratories are making changes to their service provision with immediate effect. These changes will enable our laboratories to provide critical support to our COVID-19 diagnostic services and ensure business continuity for other critical services. We are working with UKAS to maintain our ISO 15189 and 17025 accreditation. Turnaround times (TAT) of services that are currently maintained may be extended due to batch testing, and participation in IQA and EQA schemes may be reduced. Provision of all services will be subject to review as the demands of the COVID-19 response change. We will be keeping the position under review and we will look to return to BAU as soon as possible.

The following **Bacteriology Reference Department** services have been **suspended until further notice** and are unlikely to resume until recovery from the pandemic:

1. Identification and typing of *Bacillus* spp., *C. perfringens*, *C. tetani*, *Campylobacter* spp., *H. pylori*, *Vibrio* spp., *Yersinia* spp. Any isolates referred for these suspended services will be stored appropriately and tested once services are resumed.
2. Antimicrobial susceptibility testing for all gastrointestinal pathogens.
3. Leptospira confirmation service
4. *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* culture from upper respiratory tract for adults
5. *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* macrolide resistance service
6. Characterisation of *Bordetella/ Bordetella pertussis* PCR-positive clinical specimens for surveillance
7. Molecular typing derived from Whole Genome Sequencing of *S. aureus* (single isolates), unless related to COVID-19 secondary infection or co-infection.
8. *Staphylococcus* coagulase-negative: species identification and Molecular typing
9. Determination of MICs for isolates unless related to COVID-19 secondary bacterial infections or co-infections, or isolates from normally sterile sites that based on local testing exhibit highly unusual resistance. MICs will only be determined for a limited panel of last-line agents.
10. Determination of MICs for *Bacillus* spp. isolated from any site.
11. PCR detection of linezolid resistance mechanisms
12. PCR detection of mobile colistin resistance (*mcr*) genes
13. Typing of isolates not related to COVID-19 secondary infections or co-infections
14. **May be suspended if necessary:** Molecular detection of *M. genitalium* and determination of mutations associated with macrolide resistance



**N.B. Customers should NOT send gastric biopsies for culture and antibiotic susceptibility testing for *H. pylori*** as retrieval of this organism after prolonged freezing of specimens is extremely difficult.

The following **Bacteriology Reference Department** services are now being batch tested and so may have **extended turnaround times**, with normal service unlikely to resume until recovery from the pandemic:

1. Confirmation of *Legionella* antigen detection from urine
2. Detection of respiratory *Chlamydia* spp. by qPCR
3. BIDS MALDI-TOF analysis and 16S rRNA gene PCR from isolates
4. The haemolytic streptococcal work will be prioritised to isolates of Group B streptococci and then Group A streptococcal outbreak
5. Molecular typing derived from Whole Genome Sequencing of *S. aureus* (multiple isolates) for cluster investigations

The following **Virus Reference Department services** have been **suspended until further notice** and are unlikely to resume until recovery from the pandemic:

1. HSV phenotypic antiviral susceptibility testing, HIV avidity, Indirect HPV VLP binding, polio serology service.
2. Detection and genotyping of enteric viruses (PARECHOVIRUS, Enterovirus and EV-D68 Rotavirus, Adenovirus, Norovirus, Sapovirus, Astrovirus and Norovirus)
3. Detection of Coronavirus except COVID-19,
4. Detection of Parainfluenza, RSV, Rhinovirus, Adenovirus, MERS-CoV
5. Genome sequencing of influenza,
6. Adenovirus and influenza antibody detection.
7. Measles, VZV and Mumps IgG, HHV-6, B19 and mumps genotyping, mumps RT (REF) except from CSF samples

For the following **Virus Reference Department** services, **please contact the Colindale laboratory** and testing will be arranged, if required, through a third party:

1. Poliovirus RNA detection,
2. Poliovirus genotyping,
3. Poliovirus culture

**To reiterate, provision of all other BRD and VRD services is unchanged at present, but will be subject to further review as the demands of the COVID-19 response change.**

#### **Clinical advice**

For bacterial infections / pathogens please contact: [colindalemedmicro@phe.gov.uk](mailto:colindalemedmicro@phe.gov.uk)

For viral infections / pathogens please contact: [vrqueries@phe.gov.uk](mailto:vrqueries@phe.gov.uk)

#### **Food, Water and Environment laboratory services**

There may be reprioritisation of the work, but at the present time sampling is reduced. FW and E will continue to support all stakeholders and the important public health work performed by Local Authorities, Port Health Authorities, the NHS and others.



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**Implications for NHS organisations:**

NHS laboratories should note the above communication and enact their business continuity plans accordingly. Further details of services, contacts and user manuals are available on <https://www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/services>

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**Implications for PHE Centres and Local authorities:**

PHE Centres are asked to note the above changes to reference and specialist diagnostic services.

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