

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Covid Antibody Testing for NHS staff Employed in Primary Care – updated 16 June 2020

Introduction:

NHS Policy is that any member of staff within the NHS including contractors who wish to have a test to ascertain if they have antibodies relating to COVID-19 is able to have that test before 10 July 2020.

Each NHS region is coordinating its own specific arrangements to roll out antibody testing to NHS staff. The test should progressively be offered to NHS staff *who want it*, including those working on NHS premises but not directly employed by the NHS, working for the NHS but not on NHS premises, and those in primary, community, and mental health care including community pharmacists.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/05/antibody-testing-programme-letter-25-may-2020.pdf>

The CCG is aware that primary care staff are keen to have antibody testing which has led to the development of this SOP. Having the test and employers agreeing to undertake the test is however completely voluntary and the tests do not have to be done immediately, they can be spread out according to the capacity within the practice.

Antibody testing is the responsibility of the employer and as such primary care is not expected to undertake testing on social care staff or others at this point in time.

Who can have a test using this SOP?

Any staff employed in primary care who wish to have a test.

The lab capacity to process the blood test is York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (YHFT) and as such they have developed a set of criteria for access. The only reason not to have an antibody test (other than those staff who do not wish to have it) are those who have been tested via the PCR method (nasopharyngeal swab) and who were found to be positive for Covid-19.

Process for requesting a test:

- The staff member requests to have a Covid-19 antibody test.
- Prior to the venous blood sample being taken the staff member agrees to having the test by signing the attached consent form.
- The sample is requested manually by completing all sections of the request form. It is not to be requested electronically through ICE as this would mean the employer accessing the health record of the staff member who is not registered as a patient.

This way it ensures there is no unnecessary or unjustified access to, or processing of, sensitive data.

- **As the test is requested manually it would be really helpful if practices could take a staged approach to testing their staff in order for the labs at YHFT not to be overwhelmed.**
- The sample is taken using a brown top monovette bottle.
- The process must be overseen by a registered practitioner and the sample taking can be delegated to a competent health care worker as appropriate.
- The requester is the GP in the employing practice
- The test to be requested is the COV2AB i.e. Covid antibody test.
- It is important to ensure there are enough unique identifiers on the request form to process the blood sample i.e.

Name:

Address:

Date of birth and

NHS number (if known):

It is really important to put on the form that the person having the test is AN NHS STAFF MEMBER in order for the labs to be able to collect data for reporting back demand for testing in this cohort.

- Bloods sent to YHFT in the usual way.

How do staff get their results?

The requesting GP will receive the test result back and will need to share the result with their member of staff. The staff member may choose to inform their own GP of the result.

The results come back to the practice via ICE and as such will potentially be seen by other practice staff who process results coming back from YHFT. As their result is kept on ICE it would also be available to view by others accessing that system. Staff having the test need to be aware of this and consent to their data being used in this way.

YHFT are looking at a way to text the result back directly to staff in the future.

It is important that the result does *not* go in the staff member's employment record as outlined in the government's letter above.

What do the results mean?

Antibody testing tells staff whether they have had the virus in the past and developed an immune response. We do not know how long the antibody lasts so do not know how long it might help the body resist the virus or whether staff can still transmit the virus to others. A positive antibody test result will mean that staff still need to observe social distancing measures and government guidelines.

There is ongoing research into antibodies, and studies are looking into whether an immune response does convey protection.

Staff should continue to comply with social distancing measures and government guidelines. All infection prevention and control measures must continue to be in place irrespective of the presence of antibodies.

We await guidance on whether a negative antibody test needs repeating at some point in the future.

Virus testing (PCR test) is however now widely available and tells you whether you currently have the infection. These tests are only available for those who meet the eligibility criteria previously communicated out by the CCG.

Indemnity:

It has been confirmed by NHSE/I that employers undertaking the test for their staff are covered under the Clinical Negligence Scheme for Primary Care (CNSGP) arrangements.

The staff member must have consented to the procedure.

If the blood taking process is over seen by a registered nurse they must comply with the NMC Code where they delegate to a health care worker.

How will information on antibody testing be used?

The anonymised results across the testing programme will provide information on the prevalence of Covid-19 in different regions of the country and help better understand how the disease spreads. There is a requirement to report back the numbers of people who have been tested and this is being collated by the labs which is why it is important to put on the request form that the person having blood taken is a member of NHS staff.

Please ensure staff have read this SOP before completing the consent form below. The consent form stays with the employer.

Consent form for Covid-19 antibody testing in primary care

Name of employing GP practice

Full Name:		DOB
Occupation:		
First line of address:		
Second line of address:		
Post Code:		
Contact numbers	Mobile	Landline
Email address		
Date COV2AB Test requested		Name of GP requesting the test
Consent below to be checked by staff taking the blood sample. Proceed only if identity has been verified, all boxes ticked YES and form has been signed and dated by the employee.		Yes (tick)
I have read and understood the antibody testing SOP		
I consent to my data and result being reported and held as described in this SOP		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and I consent for this procedure		
I understand that if I have a positive test result it does not mean that at this point in time I am immune to Covid-19.		
I will continue to observe all the measures required to protect me, my colleagues/family and my patients from infection, including the use of appropriate PPE.		
I declare the information provided on this consent and request form is correct and fully complete		
Name of staff member	Signature:	Date: