

The SARS CoV-2 Sample Preparation Hub at the Regional Virus Laboratory (RVL) Specimen Reception



The Divisional Laboratories Team wishes to pay special thanks to the RVL Specimen Reception Co-ordinator Jane Loughlin and her full team of Medical Laboratory Assistants (MLA) who since the start of the pandemic have been responsible for preparing all SARS CoV-2 samples. Jane (pictured in the centre) has shown tremendous leadership skills to respond to the vast increase in samples received by the RVL since the start of the pandemic from 3,626 tests per week in February to 10,492 tests during the second week of September.

On the left Claire McNulty, MLA can be seen wearing additional PPE and working at a Class 1 Microbiological Safety Cabinet adding lysis buffer to samples for SARS CoV-2 molecular testing. On the right Philip Burns, MLA is checking the patient sample details on the requests and adding a laboratory number for testing. On the bench in the background are patient samples in orange transport bags waiting to be processed.

The increase in samples has necessitated an urgent and rapid expansion of capacity in RVL Specimen Reception both in terms of staff, safety cabinet provision and space. The working day in Specimen Reception has been extended from 7am to 5pm to 7am to 1am next day 7 days a week. An additional three safety cabinets have been installed so that the reception can cope with peak demand periods when patient samples arrive at the laboratory and we are planning expansion of the Specimen Reception space itself.

The RVL Specimen Reception staff are committed to the challenge posed by the Covid-19 Pandemic. They are professional, agile and have adapted to the different working patterns to undertake Covid-19 sample preparation and allow testing to be performed for the region. We pay tribute to them for their significant contribution to the pandemic response.