

Referral of samples outside SHSCT Biochemistry Laboratory

This guidance is to ensure specialised samples for Biochemistry analysis are taken at the correct time, in the correct containers, with the correct transport arrangements in place, so that the correct laboratory receives the samples in a satisfactory condition. *For rare specialist tests, it is advisable for the clinical team to contact the laboratory prior to sending the sample to ensure the laboratory staff know the sample is coming and how to deal with it appropriately.*

Biochemistry Referral Samples for Belfast Trust

Sometimes specialised tests are requested that require transport to Belfast Trust for analysis.

Details for samples analysed in the Belfast Trust Laboratories (Regional labs for Endocrine and Regulatory Peptides, Toxicology and Trace Metals, Paediatrics and Newborn Screening, Proteins and Immunology) are available via the link below [BHSCT Laboratory Services and Handbook](#).

Regular transport runs from Craigavon Area Hospital to Belfast Trust Laboratories are available Monday-Friday at 07:00 hrs and 13:00 hrs. There is also transport to Belfast Trust on Saturday and Sunday morning. Out of hours samples (unless critically urgent) should be sent to the laboratory for processing the next working day.

Note: Weekend and out of hours transport arrangement are limited and the emergency transport (taxi) service may be used – however clinical teams must ascertain whether tests will be processed in Belfast at weekends and use emergency/out of hours transport service only where indicated. Transport must be arranged at ward level.

Biochemistry Referral Samples for UK labs

Sometimes specialised tests are requested that require transport to referral laboratories within the UK.

There is a Regional Referral Test list for Biochemistry that includes tests that are funded and routinely sent away from all NI Trusts. This list is updated on a Regional Basis and is available via the link below [Laboratory Test List](#) (scroll down to section “Tests performed by other laboratories”) To get tests officially added to this list, the requesting clinical teams must go through the appropriate commissioning process to secure adequate funding.

Note: Sample collection for referral tests to UK labs should only be undertaken between 9am Monday and Thursday 12 noon. Referral Samples are not posted on Fridays or weekends/Bank Holidays.

Non-funded Biochemistry Referral Samples

Clinical teams requesting non-funded Biochemistry referral tests that are not listed on the Regional Referrals Test List will need to liaise with Dr Jenny Hamilton Consultant Clinical Scientist (60842), Dr Giles Aldworth Consultant Chemical Pathologist (60689), Mr David Sung Specimen Reception Manager (63242), or Mr Kevan Duffin Lead BMS Biochemistry (63255) to make suitable arrangements for the samples.

The form [Non- commissioned Test Request Form](#) must be completed and returned **before** any sample is sent to the laboratory. Samples sent to the laboratory for non-funded tests without prior arrangement will be automatically rejected and discarded.

Important clinical considerations:

- Is this particular test required or is there an alternative test that could be used that is available in NI?
- Are there any published guidelines recommending that the test is diagnostically useful?
- Is this test critical to the diagnosis of the patient?
- Has the test already been requested (*check for previous results*).

Other considerations:

- Is there an accredited NHS laboratory able to provide this service in the UK?
- Cost – non-funded referral tests are usually expensive, and if they require transport on dry ice for example (approximately £110 per sample), this must also be taken into consideration.
- Timing of the sample – is there any particular time the sample must be taken?
- Sample type – ensure the correct sample type is taken.
- How many sample tubes are required?
- Preparation and storage of the sample prior to transport.
- The laboratory should be notified **before** a sample is being sent for a non-funded referral test to avoid it being automatically rejected. Requestors must liaise with the laboratory to ensure this process runs smoothly.

[Note: Sample collection for referral tests to UK labs should only be undertaken between 9am Monday and Thursday 12 noon. Referral Samples are not posted on Fridays or weekends/Bank Holidays.](#)