

FOI REF: 25/719

12th November 2025

Tel: 0300 131 4500
Website: www.esht.nhs.uk

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

I am responding to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. The answers to your specific questions are as follows:

- 1. Does your trust have dedicated virology laboratories, or are diagnostic tests for viral infections conducted in microbiology laboratories?**

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) has a Microbiology department, within which is a Serology department. This Serology department performs tests which in other Trusts may be performed in a Virology department.

- 2. Do you provide clinical advice to more than 1 trust? If so, does that include onsite availability and how many trusts, hospitals, health boards, and organisations?**

ESHT Microbiology department employs four consultant Microbiologists who provide clinical advice with onsite availability to the two acute hospitals which belong to ESHT. No advice is given to any other Trust.

- 3. Is your trust responsible and/or do they cover any other laboratory, if so, how many laboratories?**

No.

- 4. What type of lab setup does your organisation currently use?**

Clarification was sought with regard to what you mean by lab setup, and clarification was received as follows:

Onsite labs, Centralised/remote labs or UKHSA labs

Onsite laboratory.

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5. Approximately how many tests have you received yearly for swabs, blood, urine & stools in the last 5 years for MM, MVIR & ID?

Clarification was sought with regard to what you mean by these acronyms, and clarification was received as follows:

MM, MVIR & ID = Medical Microbiology, Medical Virology and Infectious Diseases

Further clarification was sought with regard to what do you think is included in Infectious Diseases separately from Medical Microbiology and Medical Virology? and confirmation was received that you require the following:

In Pathology - Medical Microbiology, Medical Virology, and Infectious Diseases are distinct specialties within UK infection medicine, though they share foundational training.

Medical Microbiology (MM) focuses on laboratory diagnosis and management of bacterial, fungal, and parasitic infections. It involves interpreting cultures, antimicrobial susceptibility, and infection control. Often works closely with clinical teams but is primarily lab-based.

Medical Virology (MVIR) closely related to microbiology but focused on viral infections. Covers diagnosis, surveillance, and outbreak management of viruses (e.g. influenza, HIV, hepatitis). Increasingly uses molecular diagnostics and genomic sequencing. Shares many training modules with microbiology but diverges in viral-specific expertise.

Infectious Diseases (ID) Manages patients directly, diagnosing and treating complex infections. Covers travel medicine, HIV, tuberculosis, and emerging infections. Less lab-focused, though ID physicians collaborate closely with microbiologists and virologists.

If your trust does not log these specialties separately then please give us the information however it is logged for your trust.

We do not receive tests per se – we receive requests and perform tests based on clinical information– below is breakdown of requests received (April to March).

Five year request data based on Model Hospital figures.

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Bacteriology	153266	182221	193727	210117	209297
Molecular Microbiology	98356	177643	34364	28817	25426
Serology/Virology	16210	20181	19834	21745	21632

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6. **As a medical microbiologist / medical virologist accredited in infectious diseases, do you provide inpatient care?**

The four consultant Microbiologists employed by ESHT provide advice on the treatment of inpatients.

7. **How many of your working hours are spent between the listed work areas, per week?**

Clarification was sought with regard to what you mean by listed work areas, and clarification was received below:

You require the information on the below categories:

Please note:

1. The times described are calculated as an average for each consultant/week.

For example:

A) For infection control as a microbiology group we spend 8 hours per week. This divided by 4 micro consultants gives us 2 hours/consultant/week

B) Clostridioides difficile ward rounds we spend in total 4 hours across both sites. So 4 hours divided by 4 consultants is an average of 1hr/consultant/week

2. The sum of all the times in the list come back as more than 40hr/week/consultant. In many occasions we have to come early or stay after 5pm in order to complete all of our tasks.

3. The actual time in some sections is an estimate; due to the absence of one Microbiologists at this time.

Infection control

2 hours/week.

Significant bacteremia service e.g. Staphylococcus aureus, multidrug resistant organisms

5 hours/week.

Ward rounds (undertaken by microbiologists or infectious diseases)

1 hours/week.

Intensive care / high dependency unit ward rounds

2.5 hours/week.

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Antimicrobial stewardship ward round

1 hours/week

Clostridioides difficile ward round

1 Hours/week.

Inpatient referrals

10 Hours/week.

Review of patients with complicated infections

5 hours/week.

Laboratory work

Approximately 6 hours/week in total so 1.5 hours/week per microbiologists.

Diagnostic laboratory duties (incorporating microbiology, virology, mycology, molecular diagnostics and parasitology)

5 hours/week.

Primary care consultation, liaison and education

1 hour/week.

Liaison with Public Health team

0.5 hour/week.

Sepsis team MDT and advice

This is included this in other parts of this list.

Teaching (University/hospital training)

We are not participating in any formal training programs, but we train junior doctors, nurses, staff on occasional basis 0.5 hour/week.

Administrative tasks

3 hours/week.

MDTs e.g. for transplant services/immunocompromised, bone and joint

2 hours/week.

Please list all MDTs...

Orthopaedic
Haematology
TB
Diabetic foot
Endocarditis (to be added in the upcoming weeks)

Patient transport services (PTS)/Oncology and renal units

0.5 hour/week.

HIV/HBV and HCV service support

0.5 hour/week.

Antenatal services/IDPS

0.25 hours/week (once a month 4-hour meeting).

COVID/Flu IPC

During winter 0.5 hours/week.

8. How many microbiologists also do virology workload

Our four consultant Microbiologists all respond to questions on virology subjects.

9. Does the service cover the listed out-of-hours (inpatient or other)

The Microbiology department at ESHT provides an out-of-hours service for the testing of urgent inpatient samples, and for the provision of clinical advice.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me

Should you be dissatisfied with the Trust's response to your request, you have the right to request an internal review. Please write to the Freedom of Information Department (esh-tr.foi@nhs.net), quoting the above reference, within 40 working days. The Trust is not obliged to accept an internal review after this date.

Should you still be dissatisfied with your FOI request, you have the right of complaint to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Department
esh-tr.foi@nhs.net