

4<sup>th</sup> Floor Suite, Pegasus House, 463A Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2QD, United Kingdom

Office Main Number: +44 (0) 114 267 3600  
Main Fax: +44 (0) 114 267 3601  
Website: [www.ukneqasli.co.uk](http://www.ukneqasli.co.uk)

Mr L Whitby (Director): +44 (0) 114 267 3607  
Mr S Scott (Centre Manager): +44 (0) 114 267 3603

20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Participant

Further to the letter from the UK NEQAS Board of Trustees on the COVID-19 Pandemic, we would like to update you on our local plans.

UK NEQAS LI has implemented measures to improve social distancing for our staff but we are still able to provide our service.

UK NEQAS LI (working in partnership with EQA International Ltd for overseas participants) believe it is important to continue, where possible, to provide an external quality assessment (EQA) service to laboratories in times when their quality systems are stretched. Given the global nature of our operations and the country specific responses, timelines and impacts to this problem the ability for laboratories to perform EQA is variable depending on the local situation.

UK NEQAS LI has a number of samples already manufactured and plan to issue these samples in line with our current trial schedule as detailed on our website. As things stand, we have been assured by our key suppliers (with whom we are in continual contact) that we will continue to be provided with everything we need to continue manufacturing and issuing samples as the year continues. If our supply chain were to be compromised, or our technical capacity reduced, we will contact you immediately and this may involve the implementation of one or more of the following solutions:

- Minor changes to samples constitution e.g. a reduction in number of cells dispatched with each trial.
- Use of alternative sample matrices.
- Reducing the number of samples issued per round or reducing the number of trial issues per annum.
- Expanded use of electronic 'in silico' EQA.

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Whilst we believe it is important to continue to provide laboratories with an EQA service, we also fully understand that testing EQA samples on top of critical patient samples may overwhelm current systems and as such we are offering extended trial deadlines and are working individually with laboratories who are unable to return results within expanded deadlines to find a solution suitable for all.

We would like to say a thank you to our participants for their help and support during this difficult time.

Yours sincerely



Liam Whitby  
Director



Stuart Scott  
Centre Manager