

# COVID-19 Antibody Surveillance of education Staff (CASS)

## The CASS antibody survey

### Why is this antibody survey important?

The new coronavirus, which causes the disease COVID-19, has had a huge impact on life in Scotland. Understanding how many people who work in an education setting have had the virus, and how it has affected them, will help to strengthen Scotland's ongoing pandemic response.

### What are the purposes of this antibody survey?

The main aim of CASS is to find out the proportion of people working in an education setting in Scotland who have had the new coronavirus by testing for antibodies in their blood. This type of test looks at whether someone has been infected in the past. A second aim is to contribute to knowledge of how long these antibodies remain in the body, and how effective they are at preventing additional infections from the same virus (providing "immunity").

### Who can join CASS?

Any adult working in a school or Early Learning & Childcare setting in Scotland.

### How will this antibody survey be carried out?

Participants will be asked to complete some survey questions online and provide a finger-prick blood sample to be taken at home, once a month through the 2020/21 academic year.

- The survey is administered by Public Health Scotland (PHS), and the information gathered will be held, analysed and reported by PHS.
- Antibody testing is undertaken via the UK Government antibody testing programme. This involves online registration for a postal home sample-taking kit, with the blood sample then returned and analysed in a laboratory. Further details of the operation of the UK Government antibody testing programme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-privacy-information/antibody-testing-for-coronavirus-privacy-information>

## Taking part in CASS

### What will happen to me if I agree to take part?

After reading this information, you will be asked if you wish to take part. If you do you will be directed to the PHS online survey where you will be asked some questions about your work, your health, and if you have had any coronavirus symptoms. After that, you will be directed to register on the website of the UK Government antibody testing programme. Getting an antibody test via the UK Government programme involves the following three stages:

1. You register online, providing personal and job details
2. Each week some people will be selected to receive a test from among those who have registered. This selection will be based on job role, setting and location.
3. You will be sent a kit, and asked to provide a blood sample at home (self-taken via a finger prick) send this back to the lab in a pre-paid and pre-addressed envelope. Please visit here to find out what a finger prick test is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUgBOSqnMv0#action=share>

Some workplaces may be able to provide support for staff who would like to complete the online survey at work. Please contact your manager or school head to see if this is possible.

The UK Government antibody testing programme will provide you with your result. You will be invited to repeat the survey questions and re-test each month, in order that we can establish changes over time in the number of education staff who have had the new. coronavirus.

### Will joining the antibody survey benefit me?

Being part of the survey will not provide you, individually, with any new information or advice based on your participation. This is because an antibody test can tell you if is likely that you have had coronavirus before, but it does not tell you if you are immune to coronavirus, or if you can or cannot spread the virus to other people. The result will not influence what you are able to do, and you will still need to follow all government coronavirus guidelines.

We do not pay participants for taking part. This is, however, an opportunity to contribute to gathering valuable information on this new virus, which will be beneficial in guiding how we manage our response to the pandemic.

### What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no known disadvantages associated with this study. You may experience some small bruising or pain around the finger prick site.

## **Can I withdraw from the antibody survey?**

You can choose to withdraw at any time. We would like you to help by completing our survey questions and requesting a new test every month. But you do not need to do this, and you can stop taking part whenever you wish.

Information that you have already provided will remain within the study database (see below for details), but no new information will be collected.

If you wish to opt out from email or text reminders at any time, please send an email to the CASS Helpdesk [phs.covid-19@nhs.net](mailto:phs.covid-19@nhs.net)

## **What will happen to my samples?**

Samples will not be labelled with your name or contact details, but only with a unique barcode. Once returned to the processing laboratory the sample will be tested for antibodies.

## **CASS and your personal information**

### **How are my data kept confidential?**

- All information gathered by Public Health Scotland as part of this work will be held by PHS on secure networks.
- Some personal identifiable information (such as name, date of birth and post code) is necessary to initially link your survey and test results to other relevant medical information to help us understand more about coronavirus risk and immunity.
- Examples of other health information include records of other COVID-19 tests, admissions to hospital, and indicators of relevant previous medical conditions, such as diabetes. These records are existing data held by NHS National Services Scotland and Public Health Scotland.
- It is not necessary for the study team to be able to view personal identifiable information for the purposes of analysing and interpreting the data.
- For this reason, identifiable information is removed at this stage, and replaced with a unique study number.
- A 'key' that links identifiable information to the study number is retained. This is held separately in a secure area and not accessible to the study team.
- Contact details (email or telephone number) will be used by PHS only to send reminders about re-testing. These will be held in another separate, secure database, along with your unique study number and the date of your last test.

### **What information will be held within the study database?**

Information within the database will have identifiable information removed, as described above, and will be linked to the unique study ID. It will include:

- Data from the PHS online survey and from the UK Government online test registration system
- Information on your health held within routine medical and other health-related records at the time of joining the study and from time to time thereafter.
- Results from the laboratory tests of your samples

## Who will have access to my information?

The information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Any information you have provided will have personal details removed, so the study team analysing the data will not be able to identify you.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum amount of personally identifiable information possible. You can find out more about how we use your information at:

<https://publichealthscotland.scot/our-privacy-notice/>

<https://publichealthscotland.scot/our-privacy-notice/covid-19-privacy-notice-supplement/>

Public Health Scotland is Data Controller for the information you provide online to us and for any other data we receive or collect as part of this study (for example the test results and any data requested from other organisations). Our legal basis for processing this personal data is to carry out a task in the public interest, specifically a task relating to public health.

## What will happen to the results of the antibody survey?

The findings from CASS will be discussed with key government agencies responsible for responding to the coronavirus pandemic and presented to other UK public health agencies. In due course findings of the survey will be published on the Public Health Scotland website, and if appropriate, submitted for publication in scientific journals. All publications will report on findings for populations (for example by location or job role), and no individual will be identified personally in any report or publication.

## Next steps

### What should I do next?

If you are interested in taking part, Please access the survey here: <https://covid19surveys.publichealthscotland.scot/>

Please enter the registration code **478416** if you're not taken to the survey information page.

### What if there is a problem?

If you have any reason to complain about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact the Helpdesk (see details below).

**Thank you for considering taking part in CASS and for taking the time to read this information**

CASS Study Helpdesk Contact Details: [phs.covid-19@nhs.net](mailto:phs.covid-19@nhs.net)

*Other formats of this publication are available on request at [phs.otherformats@nhs.net](mailto:phs.otherformats@nhs.net)*