



The PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on transmission and environment

Partnership for Research in Occupational, Transport and Environmental COVID Transmission.

The PROTECT study is a UK-wide research programme improving our understanding of how SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person, and how this varies in different settings and environments. This improved understanding will enable more effective measures to stop transmission, **saving lives and getting society back towards 'normal'**.

The PROTECT study is led by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)'s Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Andrew Curran and is part of the COVID-19 National Core Studies spearheaded by UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance.

Theme 1 of the PROTECT study is on outbreak investigations

What is the COVID-OUT study?

On-the-ground investigations of COVID-19 outbreaks associated with workplaces to identify outbreak causes, which will help prevent and control further outbreaks

We want to know

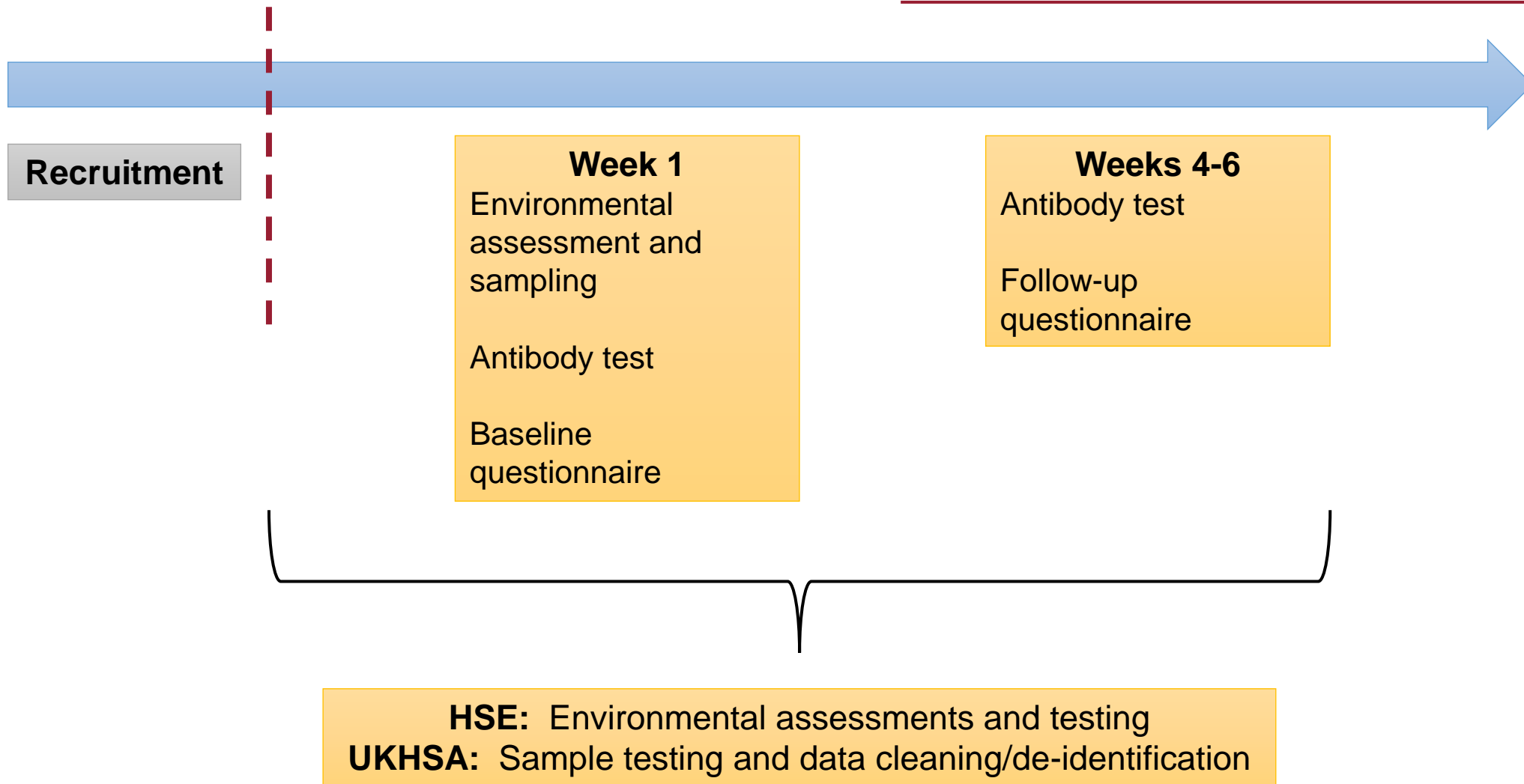
What are environmental conditions associated with SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks?

What interventions and mitigation activities prevent SARS-CoV-2 transmission?

What are the risk factors for SARS-CoV-2 infection?

What are the potential transmission routes of SARS-CoV-2?

What does it involve?



What information are we collecting?

What are environmental conditions associated with SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks?

Site information

- Size & no. of buildings
- Layout
- Temperature and humidity
- Worker density

Common areas

- Shared surfaces (e.g., hot desks)
- Canteens, toilets, locker rooms, & showers

Ventilation

- CO₂ levels
- Mechanical
- Natural

What information are we collecting?

What interventions and mitigation activities prevent SARS-CoV-2 transmission?

Existing Control Measures

- Social distancing
- Testing and isolation
- Hand hygiene
- Workplace cleaning
- Physical barriers
- Face covering

Additional Control Measures

- Improved ventilation
- Enhanced cleaning/ handwashing
- Limited time on tasks
- Altered placements (e.g., back-to-back)
- ‘Bubbles’

Mitigations introduced since outbreak

What information are we collecting? (questionnaire)



What are the risk factors for SARS-CoV-2 infection?

About you

- Demographics
- Pre-existing health conditions
- Household
- Lifestyle (e.g., attend gym)
- Travel
- Contact patterns

About COVID-19

- Vaccines
- Test results
- Symptoms

About their job

- Job role
- Financial impact of self-isolation
- Work activities
- Work setting
- Face covering

What information are we collecting?

What are the potential transmission routes of SARS-CoV-2?

Bring data together to generate hypotheses on the routes of transmission and their relative importance.

- COVID-OUT outbreak investigation data
- Local health protection teams' investigation reports
- Company testing data, as available
- Local authority data on community infection rates

Why take part?

- **COVID-OUT is a research study, not a regulatory activity.**
- By participating in this study, **you and your organisation will play a critical role in some of the most important science going on in the UK (and the world) today**, helping make all workplaces safer and getting working life, and society, back towards 'normal' in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As well as providing huge benefits to society and the economy, by participating in this study, **your own organisation will benefit directly in the form of tailored evidence and advice on how to prevent transmission of the COVID-19 virus in your own workplace.** This will enable you to use your resources in a smarter, more targeted way to get ahead of the curve in the COVID recovery.
- **Participating in the COVID-OUT study will enable us to collect invaluable data that would not be available elsewhere and to gain insight to where and how the COVID-19 virus was transmitted.**
- **All data collected as part of the study, such as questionnaire responses and COVID-19 test results, will be anonymous.** Information on individual employees will not be shared with the employer, nor will the organisation itself be identified in any resulting research publications.

Information for employers

What do I need do and how long will it take?

- Work with study team, read study information sheet and sign consent form. The study is voluntary, you can partake parts of the study, all data you provide would be anonymised
- Identify a point of contact to support environmental assessment and provide data on workforce and work activities, such as shift patterns (over 2 days)
- Allow UKHSA and HSE teams access to the site (for 1 day each, can be the same day)
- Work with study coordinator to recruit volunteers (emails / letters / flyers would be provided)
- Allow blood testing of volunteers (on one day)

What are the direct benefits to us?

- Surface sampling will identify high risk areas and indicate effectiveness of cleaning methods
- Identify areas where ventilation could be improved
- Assessment of COVID-19 control strategy
- Tailored advice where and how COVID-19 controls can be improved

Information for employees



What do I need do?

- Week 1 – Read study information sheet, agree to take part, complete baseline questionnaire (takes 30 minutes), do initial blood sample
- Week 6 – Complete follow up questionnaire (takes 3 minutes) and give second blood sample
- The study is voluntary, you don't need to partake in all parts, all data collected is anonymised. Information you provide as part of this research study, including test results or the answers to questionnaires will not be shared with your employers.

Are there any direct benefits to me?

- The blood sample results will tell you if you have COVID-19 antibodies due to past infection and/or vaccination
- We will use our findings to give tailored advice to your employer to help reduce the chances of you catching the virus in future and make this site a safer place for you to work.
- To thank you for your participation, you will be able to claim a £20 voucher once you complete the consent form and the first questionnaire. You will be able to claim two further £15 vouchers for completing the two blood tests and a follow-up questionnaire, for a total of £50 if you complete all parts of the study.