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# CHRISTMAS SIREN PARTICIPANT NEWSLETTER

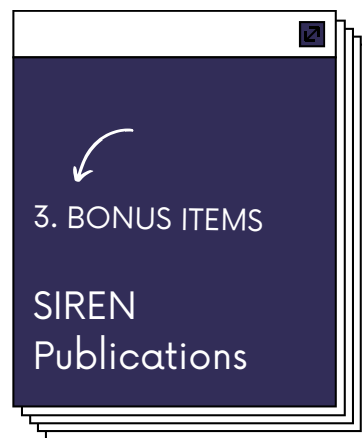
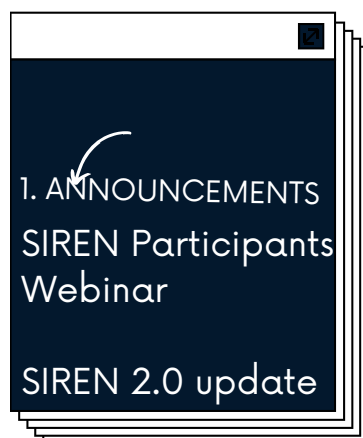
12 DECEMBER 2023

Dear Participants,

Welcome to this special Christmas edition of the SIREN participant newsletter. SIREN has come a long way since we started this study early in the pandemic and we are now into our fourth year, thanks to your support and efforts!

2023 has been a busy year for the SIREN team. We are now well underway with SIREN 2.0 and about to start our new pathways, which you can read about in this edition.

We are also excited to share recent publications with you in the research corner, the participant webinars, feedback from research teams and participants.





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## In case you missed it:

We have held a SIREN participants' webinar on the 7th December, to share the updates above with participants.

To watch the recording, click on the following link: [SIREN participants webinar](#)





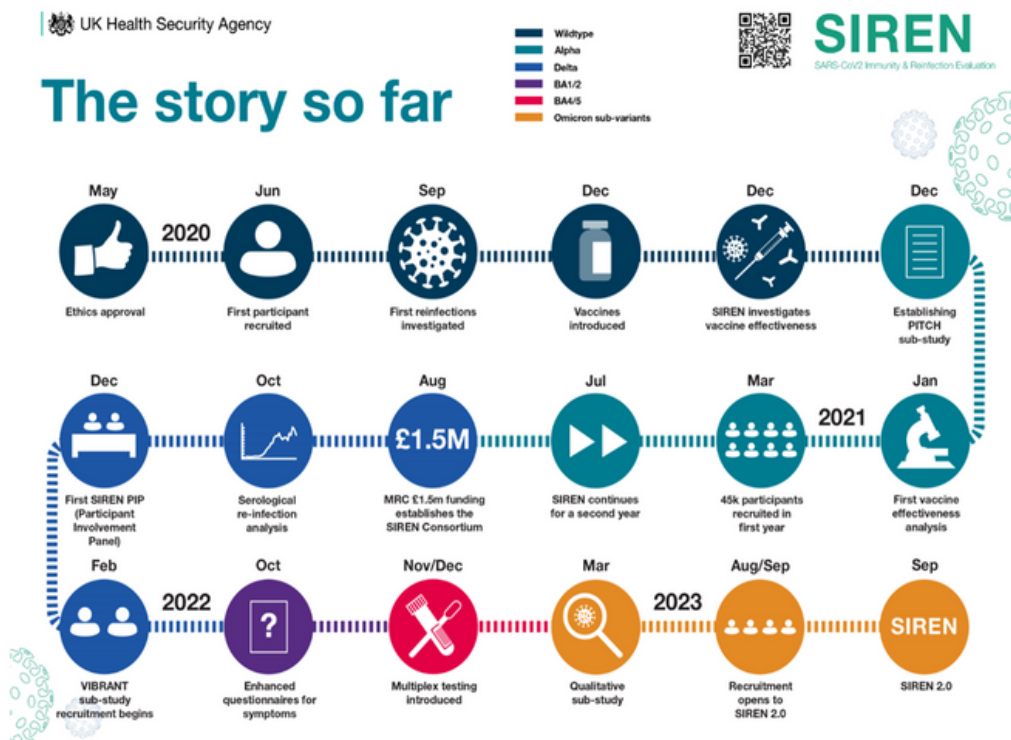
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Please see the SIREN study key milestones below:





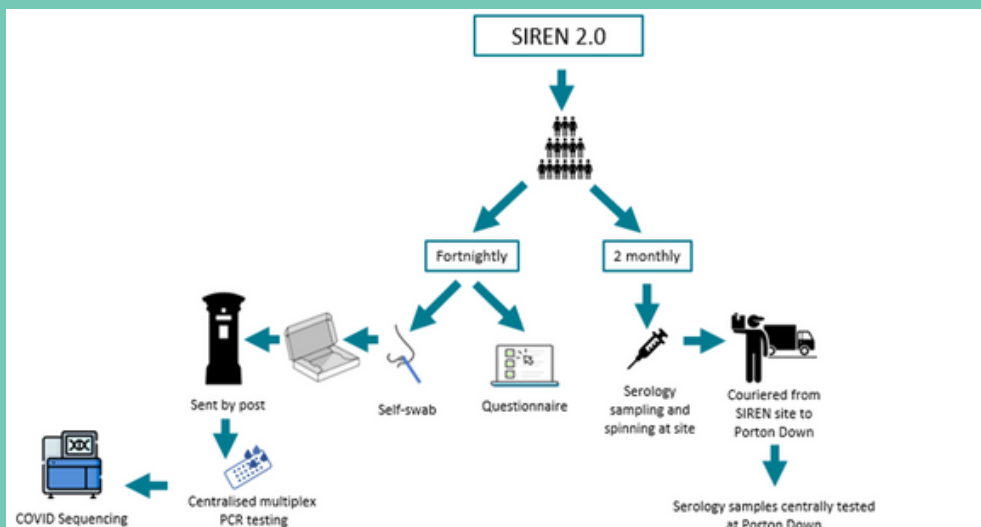
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# SIREN STUDY NEWSLETTER

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## 1. Announcements SIREN 2.0

We have now reached our target recruitment number for SIREN 2.0 and 5927 participants have joined this new phase of the study!





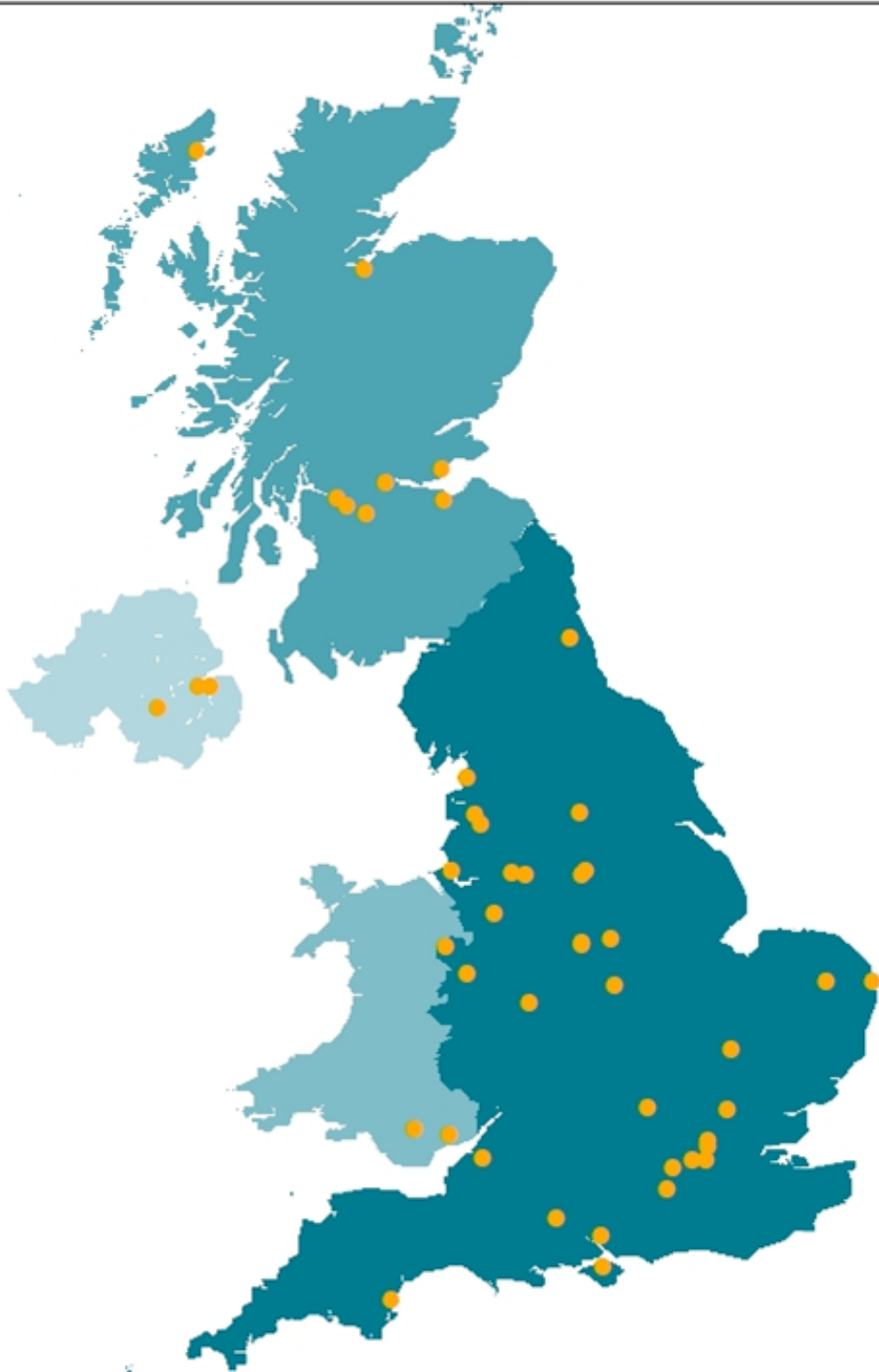
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## 47 NHS Sites across UK join SIREN 2.0

We are pleased to have NHS Sites across all four home nations in SIREN 2.0, including 34 in England, 8 in Scotland, 3 in Northern Ireland and 2 in Wales.





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## Diversity and Inclusion in the SIREN Study

**What actions have the SIREN UKHSA team taken to improve diversity and inclusion for SIREN study?**

The demographic data of the SIREN cohort showed minority ethnic groups and males were under-represented within the study. For SIREN 2.0, we have actively targeted recruitment of these groups and are pleased to report an increase in males and participants from ethnic minorities.



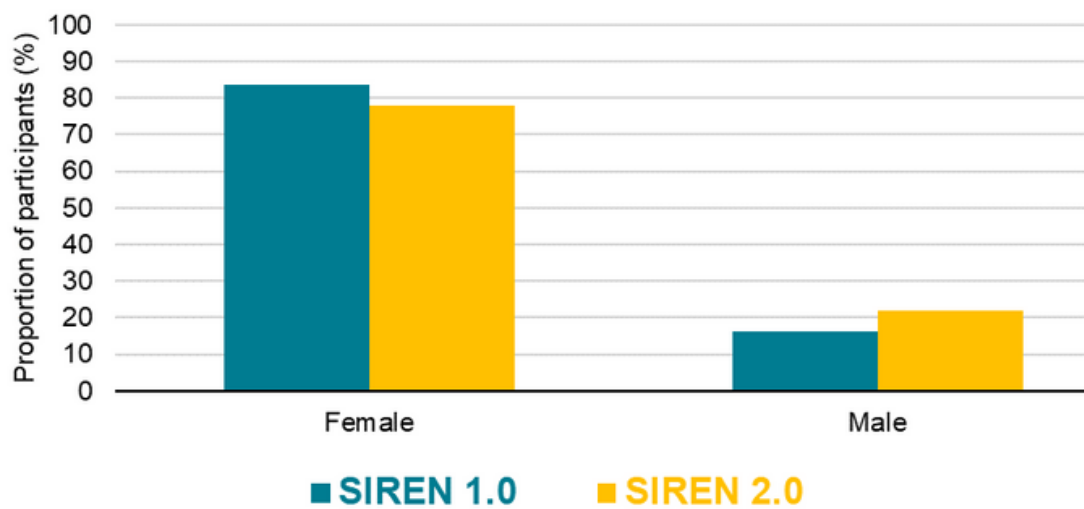
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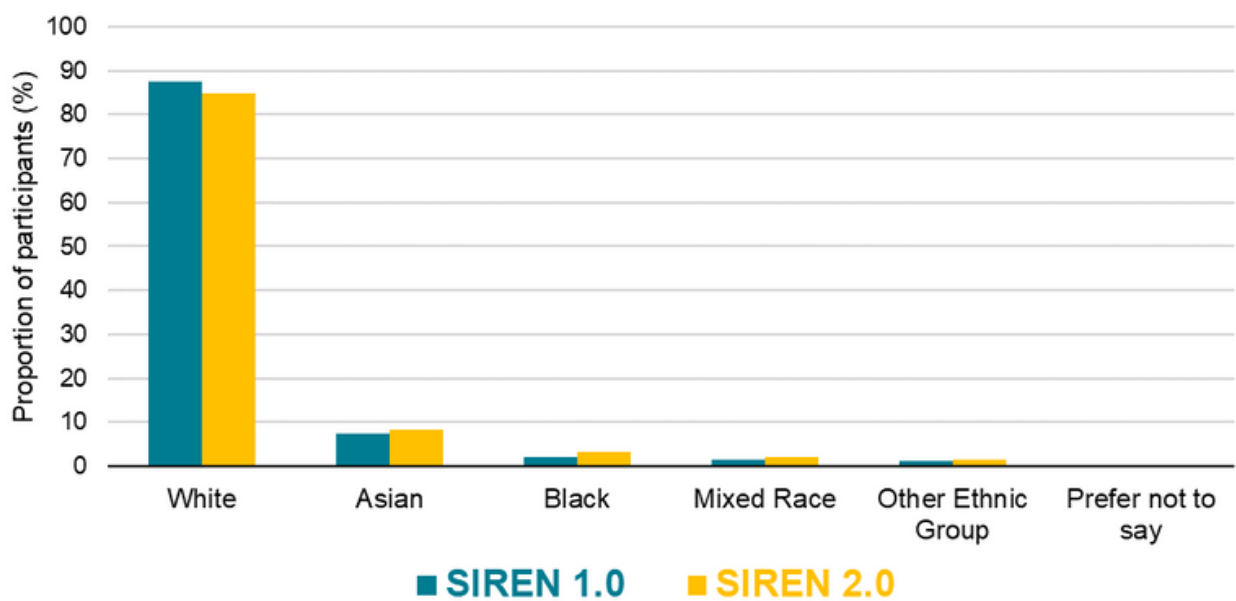
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## SIREN 2.0 Cohort

### GENDER



### ETHNICITY





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## 2. New Pathways for SIREN 2.0

We are pleased to announce we are introducing two new pathways into SIREN 2.0:

Events of Interest Postal Serology testing and Longitudinal Postal Serology testing

### **Events of Interest Postal Serology Testing**

#### **What is SIREN 2.0 Event of Interest (EOI) testing?**

This is a new pathway we have set up in SIREN 2.0 to allow us to investigate immunological response following an infection. If you test positive for COVID-19, Influenza or RSV on one of your swabs, you will be offered the chance to provide a home-based blood sample. You will receive instructions on how to collect your sample and the kit to do this.

#### **Why is the EOI testing important?**

By testing for antibodies after an infection, we can gain a better understanding of how the immune system responds to these viruses and how long immunity against them lasts.

#### **How do I join the EOI testing?**

If you have a positive PCR result from your SIREN 2.0 test, we will send you a consent form. Please select "yes - please send me a kit" if you want to join EOI testing.

Please note that, if you test positive in the future, you will be offered the opportunity to participate again. and that, in periods with large numbers of infections, we may not have the capacity to send an EOI test to all participants.



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## **Longitudinal Postal Serology Pathway**

### **What is the SIREN 2.0 Longitudinal Postal Serology Pathway?**

If you are only part of our PCR-postal testing, we have created a new pathway which allows home-based blood sampling kits to be posted to you. The kit will contain equipment and clear instructions on how to take a blood sample at home. If you agree to join this pathway, you will receive kits in two timepoints (January 2024 and March 2024) to complete and return to our laboratory at UKHSA Porton Down.

### **Why is the Longitudinal Postal Serology Pathway important?**

To understand the immunological response against respiratory infections over time we need to have blood (serology) samples collected at different time points. This will allow us to compare antibody levels between individuals and over time, improving our understanding of immunity following vaccination and infection.



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## **How do I join the Longitudinal Postal Pathway?**

You will receive a consent form via text or email to tell us if you are happy to join the Longitudinal Postal Serology pathway, by selecting “yes - please send me a kit.”

Please note that participants who join the Longitudinal Postal Pathway can also join the EOI testing, if they have a PCR positive result.

Also note, due to an incredible response so far, we may have to close recruitment to this pathway early.

You can watch the video below to learn more about how to take a finger prick blood sample as part of these two new pathways

<https://vimeo.com/670693254>



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## SIREN RESEARCH CORNER

Here we describe one of our most recent publications, related to SIREN Participants Involvement Panel:

**Title: Demonstrating the learning and impact of embedding participant involvement in a pandemic research study: the experience of the SARS-CoV-2 immunity & reinfection evaluation (SIREN) study UK, 2020–2023**

### Overview

This article highlights the importance of participant involvement in research studies. The paper outlines the approach to participant involvement the SIREN study took, providing a written account co-produced by Participant Involvement Panel (PIP) members and researchers.

### SIREN PIP

The SIREN PIP is a group of SIREN study participants who meet on a regular basis. The aims of the SIREN PIP are to provide open, honest feedback and guidance to SIREN researchers on (a) research priorities and study protocol changes, including emerging sub-studies, (b) operational elements of study delivery, including cohort retention, and (c) the wider implications of SIREN research.

### What are the methods for the research?

SIREN and the British Society for Immunology (BSI) recruited and ran two phases of the PIP, involving 15 members in total. Phase 1 ran between January and August 2022 and Phase 2 between October 2022 and March 2023. Seven participants recruited for Phase 1 and 10 participants recruited for Phase 2.

To evaluate how the PIP has influenced SIREN, we collected feedback from (a) researchers presenting at the PIP and (b) PIP members themselves. Evaluation at the end of Phase 1 informed the approach to Phase 2. We used thematic grouping, to assist with identifying key lessons.



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## SIREN RESEARCH CORNER

A timeline highlighting the key events in the SIREN study and PIP activity (see below).

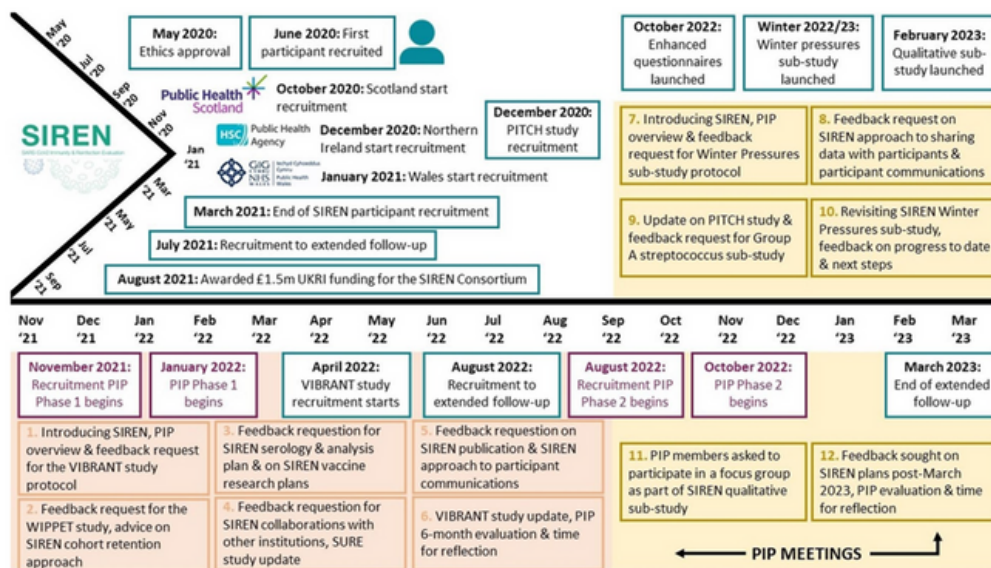


Fig. 2 A timeline of key SIREN study moments in addition to PIP meeting activity and topics from May 2020 to March 2023. Phase 1 PIP meetings are highlighted in orange with Phase 2 PIP meetings highlighted in yellow

### What were our main study findings?

Applications for the PIP increased from n=30 to n=485 between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the PIP, a more than 15-fold increase. The SIREN PIP positively impacted the design, implementation and evaluation phases of the study and sub studies.

Feedback from PIP members themselves was positive, with members highlighting that they found the role rewarding and felt valued (see word cloud below)



"We got some fabulous advice right at the start about how to engage with healthcare professionals. The panel's input probably sped up the whole process of getting ethics approval by about a month. Involving public contributors doesn't just make a study better, it makes it quicker"

Researcher 3,  
VIBRANT Study

"Even more powerful was the 'you said, we did' element to meetings in which the same researchers would return and tell us how they had utilised our feedback and taken on board the issues we had raised to improve the study aims and plans. This made me feel like we had really made a difference and had not only been listened to but been heard".

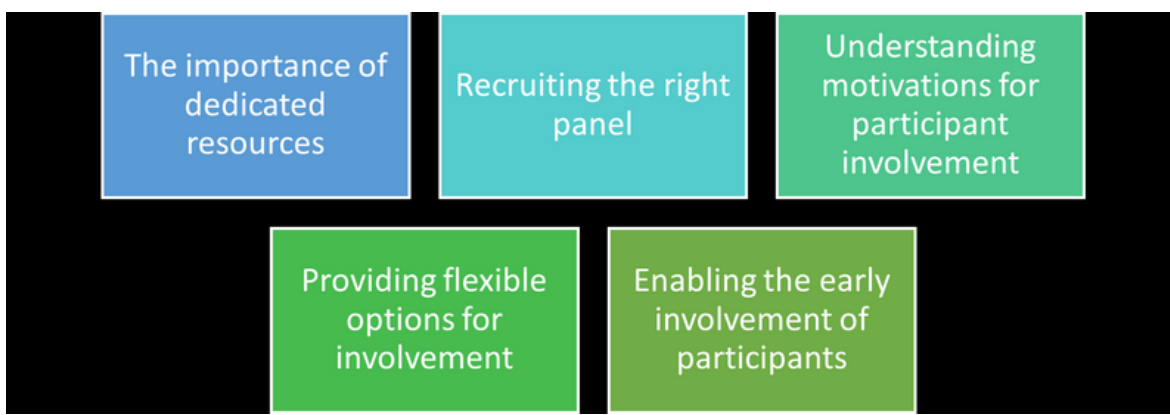
Participant 4, SIREN PIP  
member



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## Take home messages:

- The SIREN PIP has demonstrated the value of actively involving people who research is for and about.
  - The PIP has provided an active feedback mechanism for research and demonstrated a positive influence on both SIREN study researchers and PIP members themselves.
  - This paper makes the case for participant involvement in future pandemic research studies
- Read the full article: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40900-023-00506-6>

## 3. RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Atti, A., Insalata, F., Carr, E. J., and others. (2023) 'Antibody correlates of protection against Delta infection after vaccination: A nested case-control within the UK-based Siren Study' Journal of Infection

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinf.2023.07.007>

Hall VJ, Insalata F, Foulkes S, and others. 'Effectiveness of BNT162b2 mRNA vaccine third doses and previous infection in protecting against SARS-CoV-2 infections during the Delta and Omicron variant waves; the UK SIREN cohort study September 2021 to February 2022' Journal of Infection 2023 Nov 3:S0163-4453(23)00553-4

DOI: [10.1016/j.jinf.2023.10.022](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinf.2023.10.022)



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## **New questionnaire for SIREN participants**

Focuses on factors impacting HCW (Healthcare Workers) health at work:

1. Enablers and barriers to work associated vaccinations e.g., COVID/Flu
2. The impact of testing for COVID on working behaviours
3. Attitudes towards sick days

Understanding of Infection

4. Prevention and Control

18 questions – so not too long!  
We will send the questionnaire in January – please watch the space!



COMING  
SOON



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## 2. Spotlights - Reflections from Sites and

**Lead Clinical Researcher, Joely Morgan from Derbyshire Healthcare Foundation NHS Trust shares reflections on the SIREN Study.**

I am very excited to be a part of SIREN 2.0. Having worked on SIREN from the very beginning, I have seen the study through the various stages from the start of the Covid pandemic, through the different Covid strains and variants. I believe that SIREN is still as crucial as it's ever been in informing practice and in improving our knowledge of how immunity and re-infection is affected by vaccines and different respiratory pathogens. I believe that this is especially important as we are approaching winter and it is great that participants will be able to continue testing over the winter period.



At Derbyshire Healthcare our participants have been very enthusiastic to continue with the study and many have found the postal swabs a positive aspect as it has enabled them to continue participating in the project without having to take time out to attend appointments to have swabs taken in clinic.

I am excited to see what the future holds for SIREN 2.0 and look forward to hearing about any relevant sub studies linked to SIREN. I am also looking forward to hearing about the future publications that are released in the coming months relating to the results of this phase of SIREN.



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## 3. Bonus items

### A) Your feedback on SIREN

SIREN is shaped by your feedback. We have loved hearing your experiences of being part of the SIREN community:

"In the early days of the pandemic I was upset as the NHS staff did not have any regular testing to be able to protect them and others. The opportunity to join the SIREN study allowed me to get tested on a regular basis and I was happy with the fact that I could help with the study to understand the virus. "

**Vanda Martins, University  
Hospitals Bristol and  
Weston (UHBW)**

"I enjoyed participating in the siren study as I felt I was helping to understand the virus and how it affected people differently, it was also good to know if had or hadn't the virus as this made it easier for me to be around vulnerable people.."

**Jacqueline McCourt,  
Western Health & Social  
Care Trust**

"By taking part in this research for over two years (providing information, swabs and blood samples), makes me feel in some way my contribution has helped understand the future impact of Covid 19 on the population. It also gave me confidence to know that all through the study, I had protection (natural antibodies). I have enjoyed taking part and the staff carrying out the research were just amazing and very welcoming! ."

**Bimla Chohan,  
Black Country Healthcare NHS  
Foundation Trust**



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"I have found my participation in the SIREN study empowering to be informed regarding my COVID status, and to ensure the safety of my patients and colleagues. Additionally I find it rewarding to be able to contribute to further research into this virus and the potential long term impact following infection.."

**Alexandra Morris,**  
**Kings College Hospital**

"Siren study was my first ever study that I have taken part in and would love to have taken part again when the previous study finished.."

**Fiona Kharroubi,**  
**NHS Highland**

"I feel that this study has been very important and I'm happy to have been able to help the SIREN study by providing regular testing."

**James Walmsley,**  
**Derbyshire Support and  
Facilities Services**

"Siren is great way to contribute to national research and to help influence future treatments"

**Sharon Tunnacliffe,**  
**Mid Yorkshire Hospitals  
NHS Trust**



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Please continue to share your reflections and experiences of being part of SIREN using [this link](#).



## Sharing stories: reflections and stories from SIREN sites and participants

SIREN is shaped by your feedback and case studies are a key part of that.

Please submit your reflections below to be featured in a future issue of the SIREN newsletter.

1. Please use the space below to share your reflections on the SIREN study. For SIREN sites, please feel free to use the space below to share more about initiatives or achievements at your site.

Enter your answer



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## SIREN Study Portal

The SIREN Portal is our dedicated website where we will keep you updated about your participation in SIREN 2.0. On the website you can find a copy of our latest study newsletter, ways of managing your communication preferences and contact details with the study team.

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## SIREN

SARS-CoV2 Immunity & Reinfection Evaluation

SIREN in 2023/24    Latest news    Get in touch    Managing your preferences

### Welcome to the SIREN Study Portal

This website is for SIREN participants and aims to keep you updated about your participation in the study.

The purpose of this study is to understand whether prior infection with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) protects against future infection with the same virus. The study has received approval from the NHS Health Research Authority Berkshire Research Ethics Committee and is funded by the National Institute of Health Research and UK Health Security Agency.

You can access the SIREN study portal [here](#).



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Finally, we wanted to say a huge thank you for taking part in SIREN. Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Kind regards,  
The SIREN study team