



Participant Newsletter

Welcome to the latest issue of our SIREN newsletter. There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes this summer, and in this issue you will find key updates from the SIREN UKHSA team about our latest study developments, including the launch of our new study phase called SIREN+.

As ever, a huge thank you for continuing to support SIREN and for all your valuable contributions to the study.

Coming up in this issue...

1. SIREN+ LAUNCH

Our plans to monitor respiratory infections this winter

2. JOIN OUR PIP!

We are recruiting a new Participant Involvement Panel to help shape our research

3. LATEST NEWS

What we have been up to since March 2024

4. BUILDING NETWORKS

National and International collaborations focusing on healthcare worker (HCW) health



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SIREN+ LAUNCH

Watch this space: **SIREN+ Winter Pressures study launch**

What is it?

Investing in healthcare worker (HCW) health is more important than ever, and we have been using the data collected during SIREN to understand how respiratory illness impacts on time off work, the drivers and barriers for vaccination, and lessons learned from SIREN pandemic research.

In this post-pandemic phase of SIREN, named SIREN+, we are committed to focusing on HCW health. This means continuing to work with our engaged cohort to understand winter pressures, NHS resilience, the role of HCWs in tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and more.

SIREN+ Winter Pressures Study 2024/25

Within SIREN+, the Winter Pressures Study 2024/25 will continue to build rich data on symptoms, time off work, and vaccinations for respiratory infections in HCWs over winter. For this, we will collect information via fortnightly questionnaires, which will continue to provide valuable insights into the health and wellbeing of HCWs in the UK.

Participants who take part will be asked to complete a consent form together with a **baseline questionnaire**, which has been updated with new questions compared to previous years. We will **restart fortnightly questionnaires** in October 2024. This year, you will not be asked to provide any samples at this time, which is a change from previous years.



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SIREN+ LAUNCH

Watch this space: **SIREN+** launch Winter Pressures study launch

Why?

Winter can be a particularly challenging time of year for HCW, with dropping temperatures and rising respiratory infection rates affecting both staff and patients. Information collected in this study will shape our knowledge of how winter pressures affect healthcare workers, resilience in the workforce, and time off work over the winter.

For who?

All SIREN participants will be invited to take part. This includes people who have not been undergoing active testing as part of the study recently but are still enrolled and receive communications about SIREN.

You'll be sent more information about taking part and a link to join SIREN+ Winter Pressures Study in the coming weeks.

When?

Recruitment will take place in **September**, and the first surveys will be sent out in **October**. The SIREN+ Winter Pressures study will run until **March 2025**.





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SIREN+ LAUNCH

PIP Corner

Alongside the launch of SIREN+, we are now **encouraging applications to our new Participant Involvement Panel (PIP)**. Run in collaboration with the British Institute for Immunology (BSI), our PIP provides invaluable feedback to the study, ensuring **participant views are built into SIREN** as it continues to evolve.

Our SIREN+ PIP will be a small group of **ten participants** who meet online every few months to share their views on SIREN+, as well as other sub-studies we are setting up, helping to shape the research landscape for HCW health.

The first meeting is planned for November. Our cohort is diverse, and we are keen for this to be reflected in our PIP – we welcome applications from people of all professions, age groups, ethnicities, and gender identities.

For more information about what being in the PIP involves, you can read our [information sheet](#).



Want to take part?

Please express your interest in taking part in the SIREN+ PIP by 07/10/2024 [here](#).



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LATEST NEWS

SIREN 2.0 drew to a close in March 2024, marking the fourth consecutive year of testing for the SIREN study.

Thanks to all the questionnaires, swab tests, and blood samples you provided, we have had a busy summer analysing all this great data, focused on improving our understanding of how key respiratory viruses, SARS-CoV-2, influenza A and B, and RSV, affect the HCW workforce. Over the course of SIREN 2.0, we received over 63,000 swabs and more than 13,000 blood samples.

Latest publications

We're pleased to share papers published this summer.

- A cross-sectional evaluation of the prevalence and impact of **persistent symptoms** following SARS-CoV-2 infection in the SIREN cohort.
- The protocol of our Winter Pressures sub-study in 2022/23, which you can read on the NIHR Open website [here](#).

JOURNAL OF INFECTION

Prevalence and impact of persistent symptoms following SARS-CoV-2 infection among healthcare workers: A cross-sectional survey in the SIREN cohort

Sarah Foulkes^{a,1} · Josie Evans^{b,1} · Claire Neill^{a,c} · Jennifer Bishop^b · Jameel Khawam^a · Jasmin Islam^a · Ana Atti^a · Colin S Brown^a · Susan Hopkins^a · Lesley Price^{b,d} · Victoria Hall^a · SIREN study group² Show less

NIHR Open Research

REVISÉD Adapting COVID-19 research infrastructure to capture influenza and respiratory syncytial virus alongside SARS-CoV-2 in UK healthcare workers winter 2022/23 and beyond: protocol for a pragmatic sub-study [version 2; peer review: 1 approved, 1 approved with reservations]

Jonathan Broad^{1*}, Dominic Sparkes^{1*}, Naomi Platt^{1*}, Anna Howells¹, Sarah Foulkes¹, Jameel Khawam¹, Michelle Cole¹, Nick Andrews¹, Conall Watson¹, Susan Hopkins¹, Victoria Hall¹, SIREN study team



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We have also published the following pre-prints, which have also been submitted to peer-review:

- Our new **interim analysis** on protection from vaccination and prior SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- An **analysis** on how our experience of cohort retention in SIREN can help inform future studies.
- An **evaluation** of the Winter Pressures sub-study in 2022/23.

medRxiv

THE PREPRINT SERVER FOR HEALTH SCIENCES



BMJ Yale

Protection of vaccine boosters and prior infection against mild/asymptomatic and moderate COVID-19 infection in the UK SIREN healthcare worker cohort: October 2023 to March 2024

Peter D Kirwan, Sarah Foulkes, Angela Dunne, Jean Timeyin, Soledad Nipunadi Hettiarachchi, Michael SIREN Study Group, Ana Atti, Victoria J Hall, Susan Hopkins



Research Square

Cohort retention in a pandemic response study: Lessons from the SARS-Cov-2 Immunity & Reinfection Evaluation

Anna Howells, Katie Munro, Sophie Russell, Dominic Sparkes, Susan Hopkins, Jasmin Islam

medRxiv

THE PREPRINT SERVER FOR HEALTH SCIENCES



BMJ Yale

Adapting COVID-19 research infrastructure to capture influenza and RSV alongside SARS-CoV-2 in UK healthcare workers winter 2022/23: Evaluation of the SIREN Winter Pressures pilot study

Sophie Russell, Katie Munro, Sarah Foulkes, Jonathan Broad, Dominic Sparkes, Ana Atti, Jasmin Islam, Susan Hopkins, Victoria Hall, SIREN study group



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BUILDING NETWORKS

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the enormous contribution of HCWs, not only through their regular hospital roles, but also through their participation in research. With UK HCW under greater pressure than ever, investing in the health of its most important resource – its staff – has never been more important.

As part of our work on this, we are excited to announce new international and national collaborations with other HCW studies.

Introducing the new **Global SEARCH Network**

The **UKHSA SIREN team** coordinated an inaugural two-day event in London earlier this year, which led to the formation of an international network of HCW studies, called **Global SEARCH (Surveillance of Emerging Infectious Diseases and Agile Research Cohorts Healthcare workers)**.

This group brought together an international group of organisations who worked with HCW across the globe to understand what lessons can be learned for future pandemic preparedness.

Participating organisations span Central and South America, Asia, and Europe, and include, among others:

- The World Health Organisation (WHO)
- U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- European Centers for Disease Control
- Epiconcept

We hope to share future outputs from this group in the coming months.



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BUILDING NETWORKS



UK Healthcare Worker Studies Consortium

While HCWs around the world share some similarities in their roles and challenges, the UK is also unique - the NHS has 1.7 million staff, making it the largest employer in England.

To look at HCW health and wellbeing across the UK's four nations, we are currently working with other large UK cohort studies set up during the pandemic - **UK-REACH** and **NHS Check**. UK-REACH investigates COVID-19 outcomes in HCWs, with a focus on ethnic minority staff, while NHS Check looks at the short- and long-term mental health and wellbeing of healthcare workers.

These distinct but complimentary remits will allow us to look at the physical and mental health of the healthcare workforce from a more holistic perspective.



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Lastly, a huge thank you for continuing to be part of SIREN. It's only with your support that we're able to continue with this important study, and we're excited to share more about our ongoing data collection, networks, and research over the coming months.

As a SIREN participant, we are particularly interested in your thoughts on our research. If there are any topics you want SIREN to look at or have any other feedback you would like to share, please email us at phe.siren.participants@ukhsa.gov.uk.

