

Volunteering in Sierra Leone during the Ebola Crisis


**Julie Newham (National
Transfusion Microbiology
Reference Laboratory, NHSBT)**

Application Process

- **Colleagues at PHE/DoH cascaded notification**
- **NHSBT approval. NHS Release mechanism**
- **Email to PHE expressing interest and available dates**
- **Job summary and Application form, 3 sections**
- **Accepted within 2 weeks**
- **Asked to be a team leader**
- **Flexible dates**

One week training course at PHE Porton

Requirements

- **Experienced Laboratory worker**
 - **Able to perform PCR**
 - **Able to work in an isolator**
 - **Good team worker**
 - **Experience of foreign travel (esp. developing countries)**
 - **Experience of at least containment level 3 microbiology**
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Placement

- Kerry Town (Save the Children International), Makeni (International Medical Corp.), Port Loko (GOAL)
- Safety/security, food, accommodation and transport
- Training course(s)
- Documentation
- Face book group/other volunteers



Training at PHE Porton

- Scrubs and crocs pre-ordered
- Team leader training
- General Ebola, risk management/controls, safety
- PPE, Isolator, Sample reception, Extraction, PCR, Buddy role
- Real life scenario
- Excellent preparation



Training - Save The Children International

- 3 hour on line safety and security test
- 2 day training course
- Numerous documents to complete/provide
- Provided visa/flights/transport to & in Sierra Leone
- Monitored for 21 days post-return



InterHealth

- Physical examination, urine and blood tests
- Resilience Profile Interview – psychological health
- Travel Health – vaccinations/travel supplies pack
- Clearance mandatory for travel



Getting there...

- Flight from Gatwick to Casablanca, Casablanca to Lungi
 - Chlorine, temperature monitoring, health form
 - Met by Bai Bai
 - Notorious for lost luggage!
 - Taken to wooden shack, bags disappeared into a minibus & driven away. No one speaking English or telling us anything!
- Got on a minibus, driven in complete darkness to a small wooden jetty**



Still getting there...

- 45 minute boat ride in complete darkness
- People everywhere trying to grab cases
- Reunited with case and taken in a 4 x 4 to The Family Kingdom Hotel
- Registered, breakfast, taken to another hotel in the backstreets for a REST!!! Registered again.
- 3 hours later phone call
- Same 4 x4. Missing people
- 2 hour journey through towns and villages
- Eventually stopped at some high white metal gates
- Saw people we knew!!!!
- Had my first experience of Sierra Leonean food!

Accommodation, food, transport, safety and security

- Responsibility of SCI
- Meals Ebola Treatment Centre or hotel.
- Free water
- SCI vehicles and drivers. 30 minutes to ETC
- Roadside check points. Scary in the dark!
- Not allowed away from the accommodation. Cabin crazy!
- Shared with NHS Drs/nurses, maintenance sub-contractors, SCI staff – logistics, HR, security etc. Sharing with complete stranger, different shifts etc, one key!



Hand over & getting started

- **Day 0 – Team 7, 2 staff arrived (Team 6 – 5 staff)**
- **Day 1 – Team 6, 2 went home including the team leader**
- **Day 3 – Team 6, 2 went home. Team 7, second team leader arrived**
- **Day 6 – Team 7, final team member arrived**
- **Day 7 – Last member of team 6 went home**
- **PHE in country lead, 4 different**

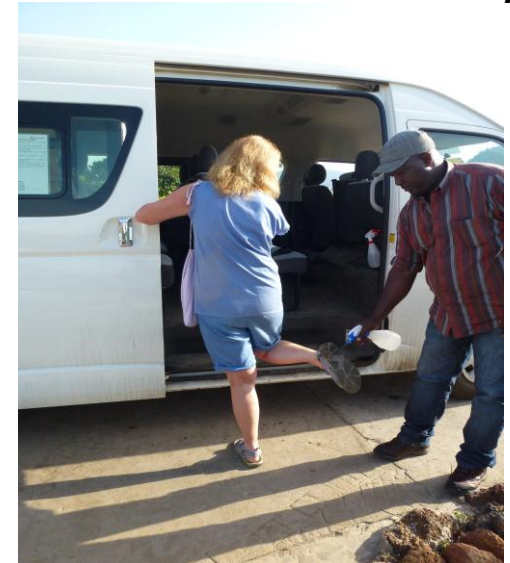
Emails requesting access to samples, information and data

Chlorine everywhere!



**500ppm Hand wash,
ETC entry & exit**

**500ppm Hand wash,
before eating.
Accommodation and
ETC**



**500ppm Vehicle entry and
exit (hands & shoe soles)**



More Chlorine!



Sample reception – 5000ppm / 5 mins (MOD 10000ppm /10 mins)

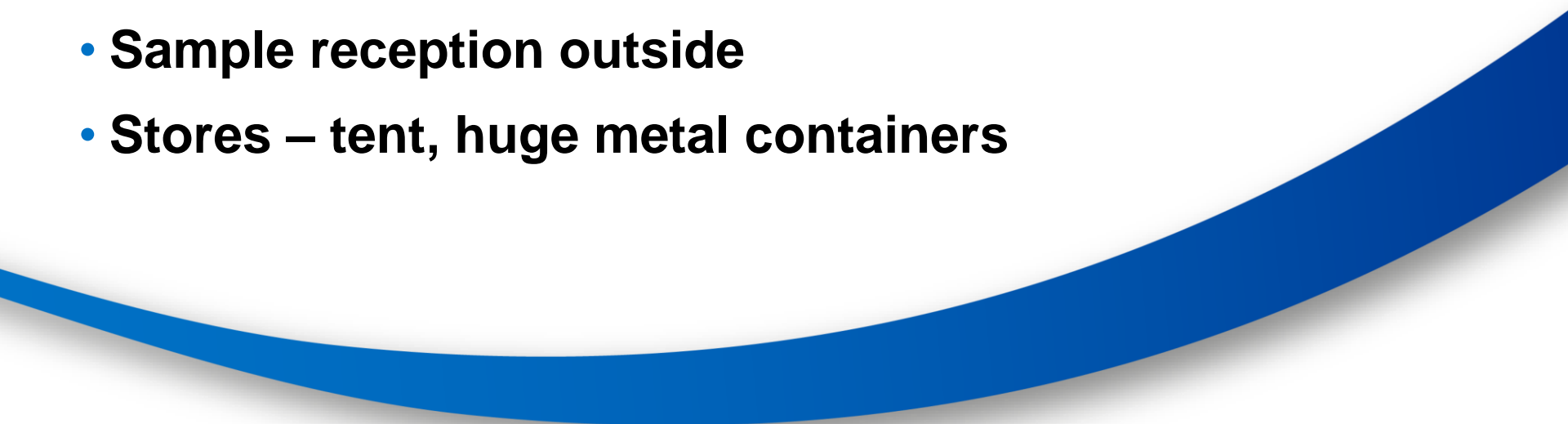
**500ppm hand and shoe sole
Lab entry & exit**

**Dunk buckets 5000ppm
10000ppm for spills**

Discarded down sink



The Kerry Town Laboratory

- **Exactly like PHE Porton, small with 3 internal rooms**
 - **Air conditioned, except for sample reception. Fire escape.**
 - **Shared with MOD, MOD isolator and other equipment**
 - **Sample reception outside**
 - **Stores – tent, huge metal containers**
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The Kerry Town Laboratory (outside)



**Store room/
male changing**



Patient area

Tea room/ladies changing

The Kerry Town Laboratory (inside)



- 3 Isolators (2 PHE, 1 MOD)
- 3 small integrated rooms PCR master mix, template and office
- Isolator waste removed by staff wearing full PPE

The Work

- Team of 4 (previously 16, then 12), 2 team leaders
- 9am – 5pm plus 24 hour on-call
- Malaria Ab, Ebola PCR
- ETC closed
- Community, healthcare worker, study samples



Lasting Memories

- Made a difference
- 99% population business as usual
- Unique and rewarding experience
- How you just get on with it!
- How well these lovely people appeared to cope in an awful situation
- A wonderful country with so much to offer
- Amazing how quickly you trust a total stranger with your life
- Ebola survivors shunned by families but in high demand by scientists!
- I can now do a PCR
- I made my mother proud!

Thank you NHSBT/PHE

