

Memorandum

To: Heads of Midwifery for all Health Boards in Wales

**From: Maternal and Child Screening Programmes –
Antenatal Screening Wales, Newborn Bloodspot Screening
and Newborn Hearing Screening**

Date: 31st August 2021

**Re: Maternal and Child Screening Programmes and response
to COVID-19**

Version 7

Summary of change			
Date	Version	Section	Comments
24/03/20	1	Guidance published	Health boards sent electronic guidance 24 March 2020
21/04/20	2	Antenatal Screening	Women booking after 18 weeks and consenting to screening for HIV/hepatitis B- consider taking an extra sample (EDTA) to test for viral load if screen positive
24/07/20	3	Antenatal Screening	Updated RCOG guidance, updated symptoms of COVID-19, amending clinical provision locally as the infection rate falls.
		Newborn Bloodspot Screening	Update to paragraph regarding laboratory working.
		Newborn Hearing Screening	Updated well baby model
7/09/2020	4	Antenatal Screening	Updated RCOG guidance Updated self-isolation period.
23/11/2020	5	Antenatal screening	Updated RCOG guidance
11/12/2020	6	MAC	Link to self-isolation guidelines
31/8/2021	7	Newborn Bloodspot Screening	Updated guidance of when to take the sample
		Newborn hearing Screening	Updated well baby model
		Antenatal Screening	Updated Contact details and detail in the pathway

Antenatal Screening Wales

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) have published guidance on Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection and Pregnancy.

www.rcog.org.uk/coronavirus-pregnancy

Women should be advised to attend routine antenatal care unless they need to self-isolate. For further information and guidance about self-isolation for individuals and households please see- [*Self-isolation: stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus](#)

Some of the antenatal screening tests have optimum gestations to be performed within. Other screening tests have specific timeframes that the test will need to be performed within. The proposed pathway overleaf indicates where there is flexibility in the timescales. The main principle is to offer appointments at the earliest opportunity so that there is scope to reappoint if the woman is self-isolating at that point or the clinic needs to be rearranged due to staffing shortages without the woman not having access to the antenatal screening tests.

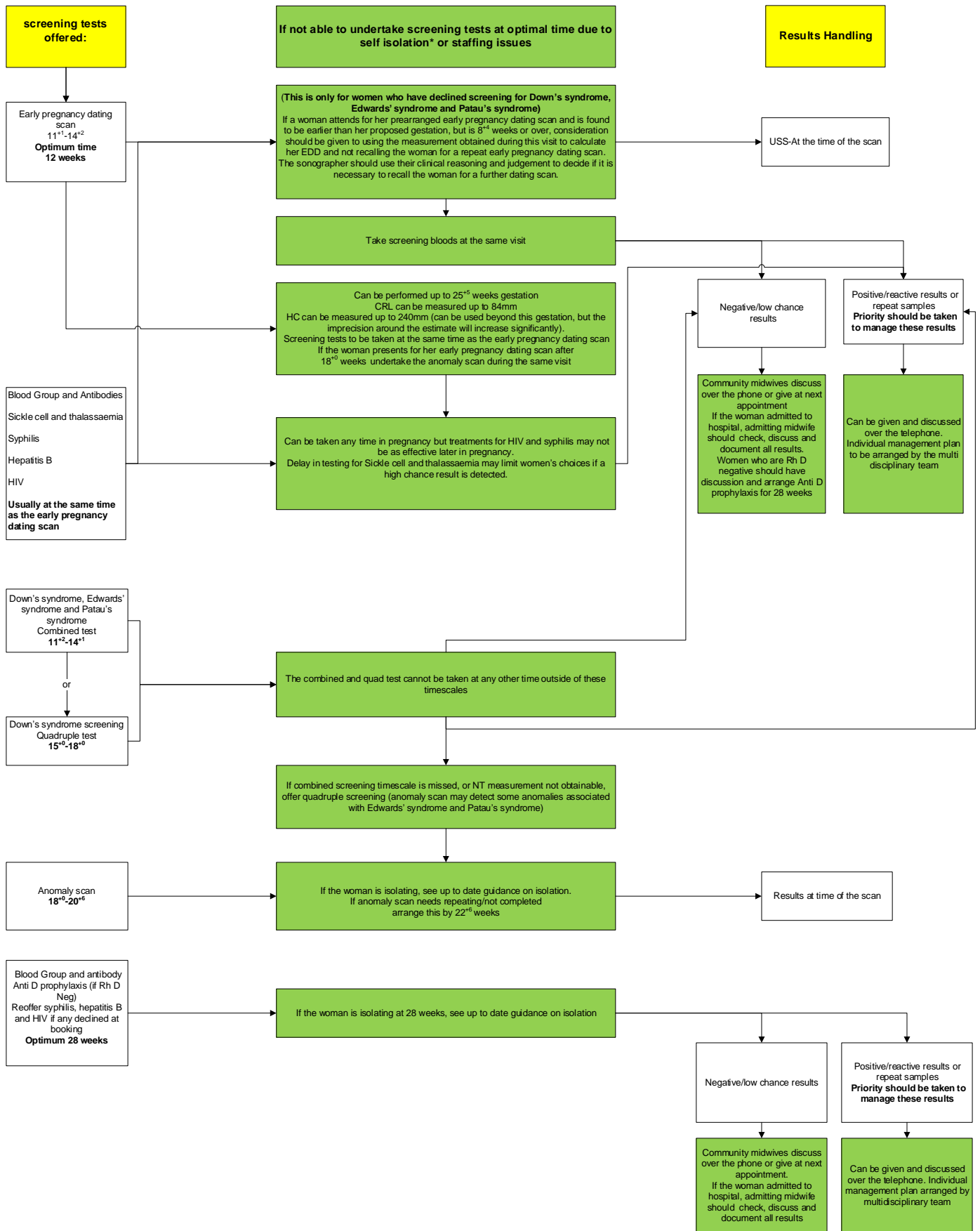
The RCOG has advised that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended schedule of antenatal care should be offered in full wherever possible. Ideally and where safe, these appointments should be offered in-person, particularly to those from BAME communities, those with communication difficulties or those living with medical, social or psychological conditions that put them at higher risk of complications, or adverse outcomes, during pregnancy.

If the screening pathway needs to be changed significantly for a woman then please contact Antenatal Screening Wales and this can be discussed with a member of the team on a case by case basis.

Contact details for the Antenatal Screening Wales team:

Natasha Thomas	Programme Coordinator	natasha.thomas7@wales.nhs.uk	07748 914950
John Regan	Programme Coordinator	john.regan2@wales.nhs.uk	07425 616328
Kindry Williams	Programme Coordinator	kindry.williams@wales.nhs.uk	07425 616337

Proposed Pathway for Antenatal screening tests during the COVID-19 Pandemic



Newborn Bloodspot Screening

Newborn bloodspot screening identifies and refers babies affected with rare but serious conditions that would benefit from early intervention and reduce morbidity and mortality from the condition. Early identification is key to improved outcomes and some of these conditions are included in the vulnerable groups to complications from COVID-19.

Conditions screened for:

- Inherited metabolic disorders
 - Medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency (MCADD)
 - Phenylketonuria (PKU)
 - Maple syrup urine disease (MSUD)
 - Isovaleric acidaemia (IVA)
 - Glutaric aciduria type 1 (GA1)
 - Homocystinuria (HCU)
- Congenital hypothyroidism (CHT)
- Cystic fibrosis (CF)
- Sickle cell disorders (SCD)

While it is still strongly recommend that newborn bloodspot samples are taken between days 5-8 of life, it is appreciated that during these exceptional times, situations such as staffing shortages.

- If there is a postnatal visit planned for day 4 of life then the sample can be taken during this visit to reduce another visit being required and this sample will be analysed and reported on.

It is really important that sample takers take good quality bloodspots on the visit and that the card is completed in full so as to avoid an avoidable repeat and a need to revisit the mother and baby.

Infection control measures that are to be undertaken that are in additional to universal control measures are those that are advised by the health board for the home visits.

If parents decline a visit by midwifery or health visiting services, it must be clearly documented that the importance of this test has been discussed with the parents. A decline card will then need to be completed and sent into the laboratory. The parents will then receive a declined letter which will give them the opportunity and details to contact to arrange testing in the future. This will be for the health boards to decide who will take these samples.

The newborn screening laboratory has also put plans in place to ensure that there is minimal disruption to the service. In the event that laboratory staffing is very limited then the conditions tested for will be prioritised to the conditions that are most time critical.

Contact details for the Newborn Bloodspot Screening Wales team:

NBSW Programme Coordinators

Catherine Boyce	Programme Coordinator	catherine.boyce2@wales.nhs.uk	07964 132707
Margaret Birch	Programme Coordinator	Margaret.birch@wales.nhs.uk	07425 616341

Newborn Screening Laboratory

Telephone – 029 2184 4032

Email – New.Screening.cav@wales.nhs.uk

Newborn Hearing Screening Wales

Newborn Hearing Screening identifies babies who have a significant hearing loss that could affect their speech and language development without early support. Screening is undertaken by newborn hearing screeners. The test (which is only able to be undertaken in the first few weeks of life) is either offered when the baby is still in hospital or within a few weeks of birth at a local clinic.

Changes made to the Well Baby service model in March 2020, in response to Covid 19, are still in place in order to maximise the opportunity for babies to complete the hearing screening pathway whilst still in hospital. Screening will not be offered during the inpatient stay if babies or mothers are identified as symptomatic for COVID-19.

The pathway for babies that have missed the offer of screening in hospital, did not complete screening or were born at home, continues to be extended to the end of the first 12 weeks of life to take account of families who may be required to self-isolate and the limitations caused by reduced community clinic capacity.

Appointment letters include information about Covid restrictions, and the measures taken at clinics to keep babies and families safe. The COVID-19 status of the household is checked the day before the appointment, and again on arrival at the clinic venue, to ensure that the household is symptom-free and not self isolating.

Newborn Hearing Screening Wales Well Baby Service Model (updated in response to COVID-19 March 2020)

- The pathway for well babies who have a bilateral clear response remains unchanged and they are discharged from the programme with no action needed.

- For babies with a clear response in one ear only, families telephone NBHSW to request a further test if they wish one. All Audiology services have returned to being able to provide either rescreen or Targeted Behavioural Test, depending on parental preference.
- Babies who have no clear responses in both ears will have an immediate follow on test (AABR) to provide further clarity.
 - If the outcome from the AABR is a clear response in both ears they will be discharged from the programme.
 - If the outcome is a clear response in one ear only the parents can request a further test with Audiology.
 - If the AABR shows no clear responses in both ears, baby will be referred to Audiology for assessment.

NBHSW update 31/8/2021

Contact details of Newborn Hearing Screening Wales team:

Meg Shepherd	Regional Coordinator (North)	meg.shepherd2@wales.nhs.uk	01978 727003 07768 487629
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Jacqui Evans	Newborn Screening Manager (North)	jacqui.evans@wales.nhs.uk	01978 727005
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Gail Hall	Newborn Screening Manager (Mid & West)	gail.hall@wales.nhs.uk	01656 754085

Contact details of Maternal and Child Screening team:

Ruth Lawler	Head of Maternal and Child Screening	ruth.lawler@wales.nhs.uk	07425 616333
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