

Haematology Newsletter

UK NEQAS

Education | Quality | Global

April 2026

Happy New Year!

Saying goodbye to 2025-2026 and ringing in a new registration year

As this current registration year draws to a close, we would like to thank all participants for your continued engagement and commitment to quality in laboratory medicine.

Re-registration for the new participation year is now open. The process remains fully online, and your laboratory's main contact will receive an email outlining distribution schedules and pricing. Please ensure your contact details are up to date. For any queries, contact our Administration team at +44(0)1923587111 or ghadmin@ukneqas.org.uk.

Highlights of 25/26

Leadership Changes and Networking Highlights

This year marks a period of consolidation following leadership changes in 2025. We said farewell to senior scientist Jenni Hosier and welcomed new colleagues Dionne Francis (Senior Scientist), and Tina Allen (Receipt and Dispatch Assistant) to the team.

Our Annual Participants' Meeting at Manchester Cricket Ground was a fantastic success, bringing together laboratories for a day of learning and collaboration.

We also joined colleagues at the UK NEQAS Consortium Meeting in Sheffield, an invaluable event for sharing ideas and strengthening partnerships across all NEQAS centres.

Did you know we are now on LinkedIn? Connect with us and follow our page for exclusive updates, announcements and news:

www.linkedin.com/in/uk-neqas-haematology-034a42342



UK NEQAS Annual Consortium 2025

Meet the Haem Team!

Scheme Director

Bashori Rahman

Service Manager

Yvonne Hector

Morphology Lead Scientist

Andrea Teuchert

Haemoglobinopathy Lead Scientist

Bianca Olivier

Developments Partner

Barbara De la Salle

Senior EQA Scientists

Joana Loureiro, Sheetal Karunanandarajah and

Dionne Francis

EQA Biomedical Scientists

Rachel Godden, Nikhita Patel and Bhavika Tadvi

Associate Practitioners

Paula Dynes and Jack Toland

Medical Laboratory Assistant

James Hindell

Receipt & Dispatch Assistants

Tina Allen and Gary Biggs

Scientific Advisory Groups (SAGs)

We remain committed to participant representation through our Steering Committee and SAGs. We have three specialist advisory groups:

General Haematology SAG

Morphology SAG

Special Haematology SAG

If you are interested in shaping the future of EQA, please submit a CV and covering letter by emailing the scheme at haem@ukneqas.org.uk. We particularly welcome applicants with expertise in digital morphology and POCT technologies.

UK NEQAS On The Road

Did you see us out there?

In 2025, our team travelled far and wide to connect with the global haematology community. We were proud to exhibit and present at major conferences, including the BSH Annual Scientific Meeting in Glasgow, the ISLH Annual Symposium in Halifax, Canada, BioMedica 2025 in Dublin, and the IBMS Congress in Birmingham. These events provided valuable opportunities to showcase UK NEQAS activities, share best practice, and engage with participants and industry partners. Thank you to everyone who visited our stands or attended our talks—we look forward to meeting even more of you in 2026!



BioMedica 2025

Annual Participants' Meeting

A Day of Quality, Curiosity and Favourite Cells

Our 26th Annual Participants' Meeting was held at Manchester Cricket Ground on Tuesday 7 October 2025. It was a great success, featuring sessions on "When NEQAS Logistics Go Wrong", "The Use of AI Technologies in Accredited Conformity Assessment", and a morphology session titled "My Favourite Blood Cell". The event provided an excellent opportunity for participants to engage directly with the UK NEQAS Haematology team, hear updates on current and future developments, and share experiences from their own laboratories. The audience comprised approximately 250 guests, including both laboratory scientists and haematology clinicians, making for a lively day of discussion and collaboration.

The 27th meeting will take place on Tuesday 6 October 2026 — full details coming soon. You can book places for the 2026 meeting through your re-registration. We would love to see you there.



EQA Programme Updates

Automated Counting (and others...)

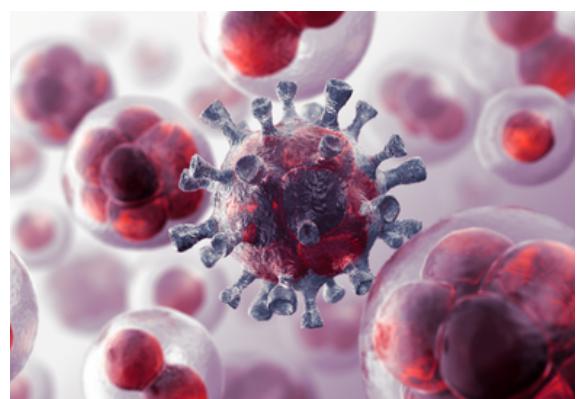
- Labgnostic EQA (formerly known as NPEX) is now readily available for laboratories to register for automated EQA data return. This is currently enabled for the FB, DL and RE programmes, with further programmes in development. The platform ensures that results from the EQA specimen are transferred directly from your LIMS to our website, reducing manual steps and streamlining the return process. Here's to fewer transcription errors in 2026/27!
- POCT Haematology (for PixCell HemoScreen instruments) is progressing towards becoming an ISO 17043-accredited programme, with full accreditation expected by 2027. The "Hb-only" programme (for instruments such as the HemoCue 201+) will now operate as a module of the POCT programme and will therefore follow a reduced distribution schedule of six distributions per year to align with the PX programme. The quality of EQA provision will be maintained, and the reduced schedule is expected to support improved compliance with EQA returns.
- The Reticulocyte-Hb (RH) Programme is also progressing towards full ISO 17043 accreditation by 2027. While the programme is currently limited to UK participants due to specimen stability constraints, future developments are under review to expand availability to overseas laboratories.
- ESR Programme: Instrument grouping has been revised to align with the ISLH classification. A pilot ESR programme (ESQ) has been launched for the Yumizen H500E and H550E instruments. We are also working with Alcor Scientific to develop the programme for the iSed instruments. UK NEQAS is currently accepting expressions of interest for participation in the ES programme — please get in touch if this is of interest to you.

Haemoglobinopathy and Enzymopathy Programmes

- The Abnormal Haemoglobins (AH) Programme has been renamed the Variant Haemoglobins Programme to reflect updated and more accurate terminology. The acronym AH will remain for now to ensure continuity with historical records, and although the name change may take some getting used to, we expect participants will adapt quickly.
- The Newborn Sickle Screening (NH) Programme continues to grow, with a 20% increase in registered participants over the past year. Our most distant participant is based in New Zealand — quite a journey for a dried blood spot card, though fortunately these specimens cope well with long travel.
- The Pyruvate Kinase (PK) Programme is now active again after a period of suspension due to limited survey material and staffing constraints. In 2025, a two-specimen survey was distributed to 25 participants, with 20 results returned — an encouraging response for an early-stage pilot. We thank everyone who took part and aim to issue further distributions in 2026/2027.

Blood Films for Morphology and Parasites

- The Blood Films for Morphology (BF) programme benefits from the expertise of a number of specialists who provide written commentary on participant reports. This year, Dr Chris McNamara and Professor Barbara Bain have stepped down from their roles. We would like to express our sincere thanks for their significant contributions and long-standing support of the programme. We are pleased to welcome two new experts to the team: Dr Tom Butler and Dr Matthew Smith, who will continue the tradition of providing high-quality educational commentary for our participants.
- Automated cell identification platforms (e.g. Scopio, Cellavision) can now be used for the manual differential (DF) arm of the BF programme. Our slides are compatible with these scanner types, enabling participants to submit manual differential counts using either traditional microscopy or automated digital methods, with both result types shown on the DF report.
- Reports for the DF and RD programmes are now generated automatically using our in-house software. As a result, the report format may look different as we continue to refine the process.
- The Blood Films for Haemosiderin Staining (HS) programme is still operating as two distributions per year, one using a virtual image and one using a blood film.



Participant Satisfaction Survey

We sent out a survey in September 2025, and received 211 responses! We would like to thank everyone who took part. Here is a short and sweet summary of the results:

Your Experience with Our Team

- Contact Frequency: Around 63% of respondents contacted our Scheme Office occasionally (1-3 times), while 32% had not contacted us at all.
- Satisfaction with Responses: Of those who reached out, 94% were either usually or always satisfied with the responses they received.

Re-registration Process

- Ease of Use & Information: Over 65% rated the re-registration process as either good or excellent, with very few reporting difficulties.

Handling of Concerns

- Complaints Raised: Only 12.6% of participants reported raising a concern.
- Resolution Satisfaction: Among those, 56% were satisfied or very satisfied with the outcome, and 80% felt their concern was addressed in a timely manner.

Online Data Entry

- Ease of Use: Majority (79%) found the online data/result entry process to be easy or very easy.

Survey Reports

- Overall Satisfaction: Most participants rated the reports highly:
 - Time to release: 77% satisfied or very satisfied
 - Content: 84% satisfied or very satisfied
 - Expert commentary: 81% satisfied or very satisfied
 - Statistical data: 83% satisfied or very satisfied

We are grateful for your continued engagement and support. Your feedback helps us refine our services and deliver the quality you expect. If you have further suggestions or comments, feel free to contact us.

Pause in QAPC and NQAAP Activities

UK NEQAS regrets the pause in activity of the QAPC and NQAAP oversight of laboratory performance from January 1st, 2026, as notified by the RCPATH, IBMS and LabMed. UK NEQAS supports the need for an independent system of review of both laboratory and method-related performance within the UK.

UK NEQAS centres will continue to manage performance concerns internally after January 1st 2026. In the case of persistent unsatisfactory or poor performance of either testing sites or methods, UK NEQAS Organisers will continue to work with the support of the Schemes' Steering Committees, other EQA providers, commercial companies and/or the MHRA, as required, to resolve the concern in the interest of patient safety. If you have any queries or comments, you should contact the Scheme Director.

~ Barbara De la Salle, UK NEQAS President

Did you know these facts about UK NEQAS Haematology?

In the 2025/2026 registration year:

- We had over 2000 active registrations.
- We distributed over 130,000 specimens of blood, 9,000 blood films, 2000 dried blood spot cards and 300 specimens of DNA.
- We hand made over 16,000 blood films (for use in our morphology programmes) and over 1000 dried blood spot cards (for use in our newborn sickle screening programme).



A Big Thank you to our Morphology Champions!

We would like to thank the following people for sending us blood specimens this year which were used to make cases for our Blood Films for Morphology programme:



- Claudia Morais (Queen Elizabeth Hospital)
- Dr Ethan Troy-Barnes (Whittington Hospital)
- Daniel Pelling (St Mary's Hospital)
- Nicki Lawrence (Royal Stoke University Hospital)
- Ruth Mills (St Georges Hospital)
- Lucia Czakova/Jenni Hosier (Watford General Hospital)

If you would like to contribute a specimen which would make an interesting blood film case, please get in touch with our team, we are grateful for any contributions!



April 17-19, 2026
Edinburgh International Convention Centre



Unified Login

Our website will soon feature a single unified login, allowing participants to sign in once through the main portal and access reports and data entry for all programmes, including MN, CM and DN. This update will simplify navigation and make the user experience much smoother. Keep an eye out for further details coming soon!

Performance Dashboard

The performance dashboard continues to evolve and now includes enhanced analytics, along with access for non-UK agents to monitor performance. Participants can view consolidated performance data across multiple instruments and generate tailored reports to support audits and internal quality reviews.

ISLH Symposium 2026

We are excited to be partnering with the International Society for Laboratory Haematology (ISLH) for this year's Annual Symposium meeting, which will be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, from 17-19 April 2026. An exciting programme is planned, including a breakfast session with UK NEQAS featuring talks on EQA and quality management, along with opportunities to meet the team.

We hope to see many of you there — please come and say hello at our exhibitor stand!

In Memory of Dr John Parker-Williams

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the sad news of the passing of Dr John Parker-Williams. JPW, as he was fondly known to us, was a former Scheme Director of UK NEQAS Haematology and a long-standing member of the Morphology SAG. His leadership, expertise and enduring commitment helped shape the service into what it is today. We thank JPW for his many years of hard work and support, he will be dearly missed.

