

This chapter provides an overview of the current arrangements and current challenges for clinical pathology / laboratory services in Northern Ireland.

The Project Team, as part of the process of preparing this Interim Report, has conducted a stock take of pathology services provided within the Province. This section provides a summary of the laboratories and their key features. Undoubtedly the data is very “broad-brush” and a more in-depth data collection exercise is planned ahead of the development of a regional strategy and final report.

The Project Chair, and Review Team are indebted to the management and staff of all the laboratories who facilitated the lengthy discussions and tours over the past couple of months. This exercise would not have been as worthwhile without the effort and patience of all concerned.

We would also acknowledge the help given by the Performance Review Team in the DHSSPS and the Laboratory Services Managers in the preparation of financial and activity data as part of the regional benchmarking initiative. This chapter makes reference to some key data items and indicators derived from this exercise.

Number of Hospital Laboratories

Although 9 main hospital laboratory configurations are listed this does not count all the individual laboratories within a hospital group or site. For example, there are laboratories in seven buildings on the Royal Hospitals site and six buildings within the Belfast City Hospitals Trust.

Total Budgets

The budgets for 2002/3 have been identified for the above as being in the order of £ 60 m. This figure includes capital charges. The financial data in this chapter is derived from the regional benchmarking exercise, which is still in its early years. Costs shown are fully absorbed including the cost of capital.

Total Staff Employed

The estimated numbers of staff are in the order of 1,000. A more precise figure will be provided for the final report. The majority are trained, skilled biomedical scientists and Medical Laboratory Assistants.

Total Requests Received and Tests Undertaken

It is estimated that over 10m requests were received in NI laboratories and many more individual tests are completed each year; this is increasing at approximately 8% per annum.

Buildings

At present there is a wide variation in the standard of the laboratory buildings across the HPSS. Limitations imposed by the building fabric are a major constraint to further realignment of services. Plans are at various stages for major developments to the building fabric at a number of hospital sites including: Altnagelvin Area Hospital, Belfast City Hospital, Royal Hospitals Group, and the Ulster Hospital.

Vacancy Rates

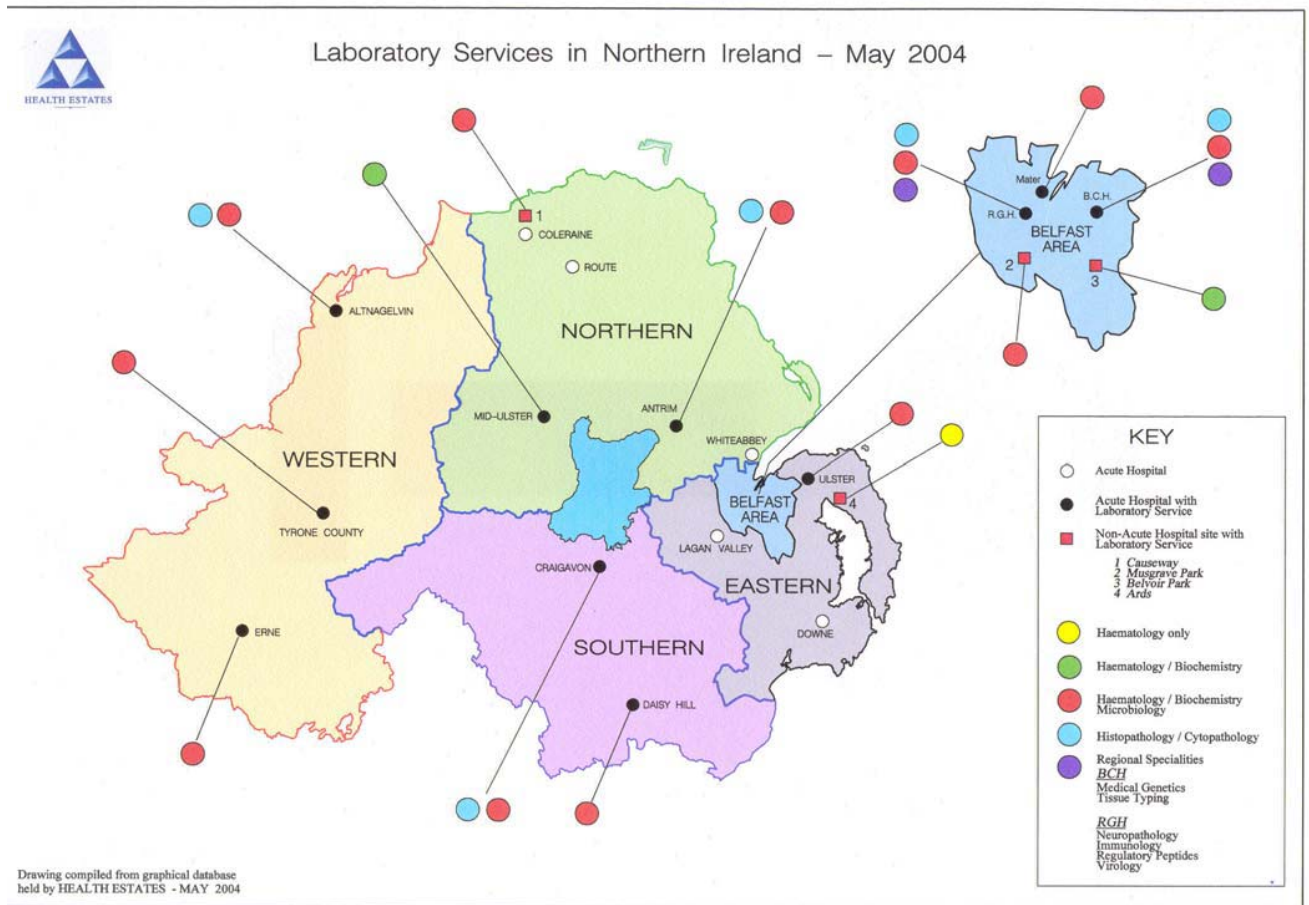
The initial survey has highlighted that two thirds of hospital sites have at least one long-term vacancy. In particular there are regional shortages of Consultants in Tissue Pathology, Microbiology, Immunology and Haematology.

Laboratories Unaccredited

A significant number of laboratories remain unaccredited for various reasons mainly relating to physical environment and lack of consultant medical cover. It will be a key priority for the service that, over time, all laboratory services are provided by laboratories that can meet prevailing accreditation standards.

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF LABORATORIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

TABLE 1



(Please note that this map is slightly out of date)

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF HOSPITAL TRUSTS & LABORATORIES

HSS Board Area	Popn. 000's	Hospital Trust	Average Available Beds 2002/3	Out Patient Clinics Held 2002/3	A&E Attendances 2002/3	Total Births 2002/3	Labs	Disciplines
Eastern	662	Belfast City	751	13425	47618		Y	ALL
		Down Lisburn	576	5084	51615	1432	N	
		Greenpark	325	3996			Y	C, H, M
		Mater	256	4887	44572	992	Y	C, H, M
		North & West	368	417			N	
		Royal Group	976	20356	100724	4714	Y	ALL
		South & East	332	1054			N	
		Ulster	643	10839	77465	2417	Y	C, H, M
Northern	428	Causeway	302		32292	1180	Y	C, H, M
		Homefirst	303	1605			N	
		United	867	8873	104053	2909	Y	C, H, M, Hi, Cy
Southern	313	Armagh & Dungannon	376	1431	11086		N	
		Craigavon Area Hospital	598	7551	70430	2695	Y	C, H, M, Hi, Cy
		Craigavon & Banbridge	80	792			N	
		Newry & Mourne	271	3862	33479	1741	Y	C, H, M
Western	283	Altnagelvin	495	8108	47314	2565	Y	C, H, M, Hi, Cy
		Foyle	271	818			N	
		Sperrin & Lakeland	509	3854	39011	1246	Y	C, H, M

Source : Northern Ireland Hospital Statistics Bulletin 2002/3 (Regional Information Branch)

Key:

All – All pathology disciplines (including regional specialties)

C – Clinical Biochemistry

Cy – Cytopathology

H – Haematology

Hi – Histopathology

M – Medical Microbiology

Popn. Population

TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF HOSPITALS WITH LABORATORIES ON SITE AND THEIR ACUTE SPECIALTIES

Hospital / Specialty	Altna - gelvin	Antrim	Belfast City	Cause - way	Craig - avon	Daisy Hill	Erne	Mater	Musgrave Park	RGH	Tyrone County	Ulster
General Surgery
Accident & Emergency
Intensive Care
High Dependency Unit
Urology
Trauma & Orthopaedics
Ear, Nose & Throat
Ophthalmology
Oral Surgery
Orthodontics / Dentistry
Neurosurgery
Pain Management
Gastroenterology
General Medicine
Clinical Haematology
Palliative Medicine
Cardiology
Dermatology
Genito-Urinary Medicine
Neurology
Rheumatology
Paediatrics
Paediatric Neurology
Geriatric Medicine
Obstetrics
Gynaecology
Neo-Natal
Radiology
Nephrology
Oncology
Plastic Surgery
Thoracic Surgery
Endocrinology
Clinical Genetics
Thoracic Medicine
Psychiatry

Altnagelvin Area Hospitals Trust

Pathology services provided on site include:

- Clinical Biochemistry
- Cytopathology
- Haematology (Including blood bank)
- Medical Microbiology
- Histopathology.

A number of tests are commissioned directly from the Belfast Link Laboratories.

The table below summarises two year's activity and data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/02	Activity 02/03	Variation 1/2 - 2/3 %	Gross Expenditure 02/03 £'s
Microbiology	Request	109,315	102,724	-6.1%	1,167,463
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	373,360	421,968	13.0%	1,589,767
Cytopathology	Request	27,035	26,207	-3.1%	717,861
Histopathology	Request	12,078	12,289	1.75%	949,993
Haematology	Profile	240,534	263,417	9.51%	926,700
Blood Transfusion	Request	13,384	13,427	0.3%	344,953
TOTAL		775,706	840,032	8%	£5,696,737.00

The Clinical Director and senior staff also provide clinical leadership and operational management of the laboratory service in Sperrin and Lakeland HSS Trust as well as the direct provision of Histopathology, Cytopathology and other more specialised laboratory services.

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology		✓	
Clinical biochemistry			✓
Cytopathology			✓
Histopathology			✓
Haematology	✓		
Blood Transfusion	✓		

Estate

Altnagelvin laboratory was built in 1973 and is located in a single storey traditionally constructed brick building along with Pharmacy. It is approx 600 sq metres and is in poor physical condition, although no major refurbishment has been undertaken. Works to ensure compliance with Fire Code were carried out about 5 years ago and some minor works were undertaken to support accreditation. A temporary building was erected to house Histopathology and Cytopathology. The Trust's development strategy envisages relocation of the laboratory and pharmacy block and this is currently under consideration as a public private partnership (PPP) arrangement. This project is now at the stage of selecting a "preferred bidder".

The mortuary is a single storey purpose built building built during the early 1970s. It has had some minor refurbishment during the 1990s. This building requires upgrading.

Key Challenges Identified During Site Visit:

- Information Technology
- Equality of access to clinical specialists across the Province
- Estate
- Recruitment and retention of consultant manpower (particularly Tissue Pathology & Microbiology & Haematology)
- Geography – Distance to cover hospitals in Sperrin & Lakeland HSS Trust and distance from other major laboratories (75miles)
- Increasing volume of work from Primary Care
- Vulnerability of out of hours services
- Lack of full compliance with the European Working Time Directive (EWTD)
- Falling number of hospital post-mortems
- Further development of Cross Border partnerships with Republic of Ireland (RoI)
- Andrology service unfunded – non-CPA accredited.
- Haematology service unaccredited – (vacant Consultant posts)
- Links with University of Ulster.

Belfast Link Laboratories

Belfast Link Laboratories (BLL) is the joint directorate of the three university teaching hospitals in central Belfast, namely:

- Belfast City Hospitals Trust (incorporating Belvoir Park Hospital)
- Royal Group of Hospitals Trust
- Mater Hospitals Trust – This Trust became a formal partner during November 2003 and for the purposes of this report information is reported separately.

Pathology Services provided include:

- Medical Microbiology (including virology and public health laboratory),
- Clinical Biochemistry (Including paediatric biochemistry, toxicology, endocrinology, regulatory peptides)
- Cytopathology
- Histopathology (Including neuropathology, paediatric pathology and mortuary services)
- Haematology (including special investigations service and blood bank)
- Medical Genetics
- Tissue Typing
- Regional Immunology.

Specialist regional services are provided to all hospitals throughout the Province and to over 1100 general practitioners. In addition, BLL provides specialist testing for hospitals in the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain as well as for the independent sector.

One of the defining characteristics of Belfast Link Laboratories is its capacity for innovation through research and development of new diagnostic capabilities and their application. Laboratory Medicine in Belfast Link Laboratories is also a major structural component of the research undertaking in many other areas of medicine in which the laboratory contribution is often a major component. In those respects close working relationships between specialist laboratories and departments of Queen's University and the University of Ulster are of special importance.

Belfast Link Laboratories also fulfils a major role, in the work place and the universities, in the vocational training within the region for all professions within laboratory medicine – doctors, clinical scientists and biomedical scientists. In addition the teaching of medical and scientist undergraduates and postgraduates in the laboratory medicine sciences and general education is dependent for its success on the very significant contributions made by senior staff in the directorate.

The table below provides a summary of key data extracted from the regional benchmarking exercise. Because the benchmarking exercise does not cover all the specialties and the regional specialties the figures are not complete. In total, BLL employs over 600 staff, has a revenue budget of some £35m per annum, and processes over 8 million requests per annum.

The table below summarises two year's activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/02	Activity 02/03	Variation 1/2 - 2/3 %	Gross Expenditure 02/03 £'s
Microbiology	Request	372,446	329,344	-11.6%	4,104,529
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	1,514,386	1,520,688	0.41%	4,764,607
Cytopathology	Request	64,000	62,476	-2.4%	1,526,281
Histopathology	Request	44,000	46,948	6.7%	2,823,525
Haematology	Profile	772,931	811,674	5.01%	3,235,220
Blood Transfusion	Request	55,677	56,770	2.0%	1,178,969
TOTAL		2,823,440	2,827,900	1.0%	£17,633,131.00

CPA Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology			✓
Clinical biochemistry			✓
Cytopathology		✓	
Histopathology		✓	
Haematology			✓
Blood Transfusion			✓
Medical Genetics		✓	
Tissue Typing		✓	
Immunology			✓

Estate

Laboratory facilities are scattered over a number of locations on three hospital sites. The quality of the physical condition and functional suitability of the premises from which the laboratory service is delivered varies significantly from building to building.

The main laboratory building on the BCH site was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century and accommodates Bacteriology; Cytopathology and Histopathology. A single storey annex of timber-framed construction was added to the main 3-storey building in 1970. The physical condition of the external fabric is poor and considerable work would be required to upgrade this. The nature of the building construction is such that it is difficult to achieve a good standard of fire safety. Haematology and Medical Genetics are contained in part of the Tower Block. Whilst this is a relatively modern building in good physical condition, accommodation is quite cramped in many areas, particularly genetics laboratory space. Biochemistry is housed partly in a purpose-designed single storey building (constructed in 1985), which is in fairly good physical condition, with support accommodation in the Gardner Robb building (circa 1847), which is in very poor physical condition and is due for demolition to facilitate future site development. Tissue Typing is located within the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion building which is good quality estate.

On Belvoir Park Hospital site a small laboratory houses haematology and clinical biochemistry. This building has recently been refurbished and is in fairly good condition, which should enable it to last for the foreseeable future of laboratory services on that site.

On the Royal Group of Hospitals site the Institute of Pathology, built in 1933 houses Haematology, Histopathology, Neuropathology and non-gynae Cytopathology. It is owned by Queens University, Belfast and is in generally good to fair condition. The Mortuary was completed in 1995 and also houses the State Pathology service. It is a 'state of the art' facility in good condition. The Kelvin laboratories

are located in the old Kelvin School building that was extensively refurbished in 1994. It houses Bacteriology, Clinical biochemistry, Mycology and Virology and is in good condition and well equipped. At present a quality sectional building is being erected contiguous to the Kelvin Building to re- house haematology and immunology on that site. This is to facilitate the vacation of all NHS services from QUB Microbiology Building. There is also a small haematology laboratory within the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. The Royal Maternity Hospital houses two laboratories, one manned by QUB staff providing andrology services and another providing fertility services including embryology. A small HPSS laboratory providing regulatory peptides is situated within the Mulhouse building.

The BLL Directorate has recently completed an outline business case for a comprehensive redevelopment of laboratory estate.

Key Challenges Identified During Site Visit

- Need for strategic redevelopment of laboratory buildings to enable further realignment of laboratory services
- Need for investment in capital equipment
- Lack of compliance with EWTD
- Vulnerability of out of hours services
- Cumbersome management system – accountable to three Trusts
- Inability to fill consultant vacancies in Microbiology, Tissue Pathology and Immunology
- Burden on NHS consultants of post graduate and undergraduate teaching
- Burden of training large numbers of trainee BMS staff
- Full implementation of pneumatic tube system
- Future workforce development and links with Universities
- Storage of records, blocks, slides, tissue banks etc
- Storage of large bodies in the body store.

Causeway Health and Social Services Trust

Pathology services provided on site:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Haematology
- Blood Bank.

Histopathology and Cytopathology are provided from Antrim Area Hospital. A range of tests is commissioned from BLL.

The table below summarises two year's activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/2	Activity 02/3	Variation 01/2 - 02/3 %	Gross Expenditure £'s
Microbiology	Request	52,728	55,688	5.6%	668,883
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	199,571	221,535	11.0%	936,169
Haematology	Profile	121,257	125,495	3.5%	556,612
Blood Transfusion	Request	3,385	5,303	56%	90,106
TOTAL		376,941	408,021	8.26%	£2,251,770.00

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology			✓
Clinical biochemistry			✓
Haematology			✓
Blood Transfusion			✓

Estate

Laboratories at Causeway have been constructed as purpose designed facilities in recent years and are in good condition. They are state of the art. There is a state of the art three-station mortuary facility including one station designed specifically for paediatric post mortems.

Key Challenges Identified during the site visit:

- Need to improve IT and maximise potential of IT, communications and point of care testing
- Repertoire of modern analysers is broader than traditional boundaries
- IT capacity to 'add value' must be exploited
- Potential for greater harmonisation of methodologies and operating systems across the Province
- Burden of training on smaller unit – need for collaborative approach

- Need to maintain local flexibility
- Links with Universities
- Isolation of consultant staff
- Need for the service to be more patient and population focused
- Equality of access to services.

Craigavon Area Hospitals Trust
(Incorporating services provided from Daisy Hill Hospital laboratory)

Pathology services provided on site at Craigavon Area Hospital include:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Cytopathology
- Haematology
- Histopathology
- Blood Transfusion

Services are provided for the GPs and hospitals in the whole of Southern HSS Boards area and for some Rol hospitals. A range of tests is commissioned from BLL.

Pathology services provided on site at Daisy Hill Hospital include:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Haematology
- Blood Transfusion.

The table below presents two years' activity and key data relevant to the services provided.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	No of Requests 01/02	No of Requests 02/03	Variation 1/2 - 2/3 %	Gross Expenditure 02/03 £'s
Microbiology	Request	157,231	159,168	1.2%	1,253,001
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	666,287	754,056	13.1%	1,727,593
Cytopathology	Request	27,614	29,645	7.3%	576,162
Histopathology	Request	12,035	12,772	6.1%	804,826
Haematology	Profile	337,805	348,285	3.4%	845,136
Blood Transfusion	Request	18,447	19,569	6.1%	281,712
TOTAL		1,219,419	1,323,495	8.54%	£5,488,430.00

CPA Accreditation Status (Accredited under new 2004 standards)

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology			✓
Clinical biochemistry			✓
Cytopathology		✓	
Histopathology		✓	
Haematology		✓	
Blood Transfusion			✓

Estate

- **Craigavon Area Hospital**

The laboratory at Craigavon Area Hospital can be sub-divided into two distinct buildings, the original block constructed in the 1960s and a new block connected by a link entrance hall constructed in the early 1990s. The newer building is in good physical condition and recent remedial works have addressed any defective elements of the external fabric. The electrical installation and fire alarm installation are in good condition. Additional extract ventilation is required to some areas and mechanical services require upgrading. There is a shortage of space for Biochemistry laboratory work and for consultants' offices. The mortuary is a single storey building of traditional construction (c 1971). This building requires upgrading.

- **Daisy Hill Hospital**

Laboratory facilities at Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry are provided from a single storey sectional building (occupational therapy is also accommodated under the same roof). The building is over 30 years old and was refurbished about 15 years ago. The building is in poor to fair physical condition. A new flat roof covering was recently installed; however window replacement is urgently required. Working conditions are cramped in the laboratory. The mortuary is a single storey building opposite the laboratory building.

Key Challenges Identified during site visit included:

- Information Technology
- Increasing workload demands
- Consultant staff vacancies – Tissue Pathology
- Vulnerability of out of hours services – particularly on Daisy Hill Hospital site
- Need for regional strategy for procurement of equipment
- Need for harmonisation of methodology and operating procedures
- Opportunities for cross Trust working and regional integration

Greenpark Health Care Trust

Pathology services provided on site:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Haematology
- Blood Bank.

Tissue pathology and other specialist services are commissioned from BLL.

The table below summarises two years' activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	No of Requests 01/2	No of Requests 02/3	Variation 1/2 - 2/3 %	Gross Expenditure 02/03 £'s
Microbiology	Request	40,038	43,821	9.4%	294,914
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	151,975	165,207	5.6%	472,209
Haematology	Profile	57,211	63,186	10.4%	202,864
Blood Transfusion	Request	5,036	5,928	17.7%	170,983
TOTAL		254,260	278,142	9.4%	1,140,970

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology			✓
Clinical biochemistry			✓
Haematology			✓
Blood Transfusion			✓

Estate

The laboratories are situated in a single storey building that has been refurbished during the 1980s to meet the needs of the laboratories. The building is in fair condition there are some pressures on space and some minor works are planned to address this.

Key Issues identified during site visit:

- Professional direction off site with disciplines managed through an informal network.
- Focus on logic of the clinical services being musculoskeletal and rehabilitation
- Off-site consultant cover
- The multidisciplinary working arrangements particularly for out of hours services
- Vulnerability of out of hours services
- The need for a unified laboratory service development strategy and fund.

- The opportunity for secondment of BMS staff to other laboratories
- The opportunity for a training strategy for the whole of Ireland.
- The need to explore the concept of a well person laboratory.
- The role of the Universities.
- The need for unified management structure.
- Workforce development, configuration and opportunities to organise recruitment on a regional basis.

Mater Hospital Trust

Pathology services provided on site:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Haematology
- Blood Bank.

Tissue pathology and other specialist services are commissioned from BLL. In recent months the Mater Hospital has entered into the BLL partnership.

The table below summarises two years' activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/2	Activity 02/3	Variation 01/2 - 02/3 %	Gross Expenditure £'s
Microbiology	Request	27,985	30,437	8.7%	388,216
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	132,016	144,419	9.4%	469,823
Haematology	Profile	90,591	98,518	8.8%	409,707
Blood Transfusion	Request	0	0	0	22,810
TOTAL		250,592	273,374	9.1%	£821,202.82

Estate

The Mater Trust laboratory is currently housed in a very sub-standard building. It is in poor physical condition and it would not be practicable to upgrade it. The building adjoining the laboratory has been demolished in order to facilitate a new access road to the hospital and this has further downgraded the laboratory facility. Within the past year some minor works have been completed to improve office and staff facilities.

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology	✓		
Clinical biochemistry	✓		
Haematology	✓		
Blood Transfusion	✓		

Key Challenges identified during site visit:

- Loss of CPA accreditation
- Information Technology
- Need for capital equipment
- Development as part of the BLL partnership
- Need for local flexibility and support for acute profile of Mater Hospital
- Consultant staffing
- Multi-disciplinary working – out of hours
- Lack of EWTD compliance
- Vulnerability of out of hours services.

Sperrin Lakeland Health and Social Services Trust

Pathology services are provided from two sites:

- Microbiology (Tyrone County Hospital)
- Clinical biochemistry (Erne Hospital and Tyrone County Hospital)
- Haematology (Erne Hospital and Tyrone County Hospital)
- Blood Bank. (Erne Hospital and Tyrone County Hospital)
- In addition mortuary services are located on Tyrone Fermanagh Hospital site.

Consultant manpower is provided from Altnagelvin – this is confined to a limited number of sessions per week.

Tissue pathology and other specialist services are commissioned from Altnagelvin Hospital and a range of tests from BLL.

The table below summarises two years' activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/2	Activity 02/3	Variation 01/2 - 02/3 %	Gross Expenditure £'s
Microbiology	Request	56,018	57,273	2.3%	491,216
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	208,198	236,161	13%	1,104,190
Haematology	Profile	130,059	134,202	3.2	581,860
Blood Transfusion	Request	0	4,399		190,343
TOTAL		394,275	432,035		£2,367,609.00

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation	Explanation
Microbiology	✓			Accreditation not applied for due to inability to recruit inadequate consultant manpower and constraints of estate in Erne Hospital site
Clinical biochemistry	✓			
Haematology	✓			
Blood Transfusion	✓			

Estate

The laboratories at Tyrone County Hospital, Omagh were purpose-built during the 1990s and are in good condition.

Laboratories in the Erne Hospital are located on the third floor of the hospital building. The location is inappropriate and conditions are extremely cramped. In recent months Microbiology has been moved off site to Omagh making a little bit more space available.

The mortuary is located on the Tyrone Fermanagh Hospital site in Omagh and is in poor physical condition.

Key Challenges identified during the site visit:

- Need for a regional IT system
- Need for distant site results recall
- Lack of CPA Accreditation
- Lack of consultant medical and scientific cover
- Physical estate
- Increasing demands on services on behalf of primary care practitioners
- Lack of EWTD compliance
- Vulnerability of out of hours services
- Physical geography – distance between hospitals in the Western HSS Boards area
- Transportation – major constraint on service realignment
- Staff development – particularly BMS.

Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust

Pathology services provided from the Ulster Hospital include:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Haematology
- Blood Bank

Tissue pathology and other specialist services are commissioned from BLL. The consultant clinical biochemists and haematologists also provide clinical cover for Greenpark Trust.

The table below summarises two years' activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/2	Activity 02/3	Variation 01/2 - 02/3 %	Gross Expenditure £'s
Microbiology	Request	112,193	114,422	2.0%	1,076,118
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	328,682	366,604	11.5%	1,481,683
Haematology	Profile	238,975	248,619	4.0%	1,002,060
Blood Transfusion	Request	13,496	15,086	11.7%	226,914
TOTAL		693,346	744,731	10.7%	£3,786,775.00

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology		✓	
Clinical biochemistry		✓	
Haematology		✓	
Blood Transfusion		✓	

Estate

The laboratories at the Ulster Hospital are located on the first floor of a 2-storey building constructed in 1962. It is of traditional concrete framed construction and occupies a total area of 760m². The laboratories are functionally unsuitable, grossly overcrowded, are below standard in relation to both Energy Performance and Statutory Standards and are in poor physical condition. The Trust has recently submitted a full business case for new laboratory facilities to the DHSSPS for consideration.

Key Challenges identified during site visit:

- Physical estate
- Lack of EWTD compliance
- Need for an integrated regional IT system
- Inability to recruit and retain consultant medical and scientific staff – particularly acute in microbiology
- Increasing demands form primary and community care services
- Sustainability of vulnerable out of hours services
- Changing profile of hospital services
- Redevelopment of hospital site
- Links with regional pathology services.

United Hospitals Trust

Pathology services provided on Antrim Area Hospital site:

- Microbiology
- Clinical biochemistry
- Cytopathology
- Haematology
- Histopathology
- Blood Bank.

A limited laboratory service is provided on the Mid-Ulster Hospital site – some 17 miles away from Antrim – routine clinical biochemistry and haematology.

A range of other specialist services is commissioned from BLL.

The table below summarises two years' activity and key data pertaining to these services.

Services Provided	Activity Unit Of Measure	Activity 01/2	Activity 02/3	Variation 01/2 - 02/3 %	Gross Expenditure £'s
Microbiology	Request	202,435	206,561	2.1%	1,609,213
Clinical biochemistry	Profile	651,069	750,268	10.2%	2,255,522
Cytopathology	Request	32,899	34,318	4.3%	760,921
Histopathology	Request	14,486	15,928	9.9%	851,914
Haematology	Profile	517,417	547,915	5.9%	1,130,762
Blood Transfusion	Request	19,078	20,434	7.1%	436,748
TOTAL		1,437,384	1,575,424	9.6%	£7,045,080.00

Accreditation Status

Discipline	Not Accredited	Conditional Accreditation	Full Accreditation
Microbiology			✓
Clinical biochemistry			✓
Cytopathology			✓
Histopathology			✓
Haematology			✓
Blood Transfusion			✓

Estate

The laboratory building at Antrim Area Hospital was purpose built in 1994. The build is in good condition. The Trust's strategic site development plan envisages some expansion of the laboratory building in the medium term.

There is also a mortuary facility within the main hospital complex; this is in good physical condition.

The laboratory on the Mid Ulster site is in poor physical condition.

Key Challenges identified during the site visit:

- Inadequacy of laboratory IT system
- Concerns over block contracting arrangements for regional pathology services
- Constraints on development of local expertise
- Need to ensure equity of service provision regionally
- Need to ensure local flexibility and responsiveness
- Need to promote innovation
- Need for greater integration of management and strategic service development
- Isolation of single-handed consultants in the existing arrangements.