

Transforming FIT Testing at University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust

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FIT Team at University Hospitals Leicester

In February 2026, the FIT product management team at Alpha Laboratories sat down with Kalpna Wright, Advanced Specialist Biomedical Scientist for Special Chemistry, and Gary Bateman, Scientific Laboratory Manager at University Hospitals Leicester (UHL), to review their experience of bringing Faecal Immunochemical Testing in-house and how this has impacted their daily tasks and overall patient outcomes.

UHL began working with Alpha Laboratories in 2024, initially bringing in one HM-JACKarc analyser for in-house testing, and then a second HM-JACKarc analyser, as well as bespoke FIT KITS on The Alpha Portal for distribution across their GP network in 2025. Since then, the Trust has seen remarkable improvements in their workflow efficiency, turnaround times, and overall patient experience.

Bringing FIT Testing In-House:

A Turning Point for Patient Care

Before UHL implemented in-house FIT testing, FIT samples requested by Leicester's primary care network were routed directly from the GP to an external testing site. A FIT kit would then be sent to the patient from the external test provider, and the patient would send their sample back to the external provider for analysis. However, this process could be lengthy and subject to many factors outside of UHL's control which ultimately resulted in delays.

Kalpna recalls:

“There was a significant delay between the request being raised by the GP and the patient receiving the result.”

The Trust's decision to bring FIT testing onto the HM-JACKarc analyser in 2024 completely transformed service speed and reliability.

Kalpna added:

“Across LLR (Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland), 94.3% of LGI referrals are accompanied by a FIT test result 21 days prior to the referral being made, which is the highest in the East Midlands.”

Turnaround times have dramatically improved:

- ▶ Before: upwards of 14 days
- ▶ Now: no more than 3 days

This improvement has had a direct impact on patient management and clinical decision-making. This allows clinicians and healthcare professionals to identify high-risk patients sooner and provide faster reassurance for low-risk individuals. This also massively shortens the overall care pathway, improving the patient experience and ensuring patients who require urgent care receive it.



Seamless Workflow with Alpha's FIT KITS

University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust uses a bespoke FIT pack, which is ordered directly to GPs by the hospital staff through Alpha Laboratories' online ordering system, The Alpha Portal – Alpha's customer facing online ordering website.

These kits are handed out by GPs and returned to the same practice before being transported to the hospital via local courier runs for testing. Depending on when the kits arrive back at the hospital, the UHL aims to test them the same day.

When asked about staff experience with The Alpha Portal, Kalpna shared:

“The Alpha Portal is really easy to use – it couldn't be any simpler.”

Transitioning to the Alpha FIT kits via The Alpha Portal has delivered multiple benefits:

✓ Minimal admin required

Multiple admin and lab staff can be set up with different log in details to The Alpha Portal, ensuring the stock quantity is always monitored by someone and orders can be raised accordingly.

✓ Bespoke kitting options

As highlighted above, our FIT KITS are bespoke and tailored to the trust's specific needs. This can involve including Fe-Col® collection paper, a GP or Postal return envelope, an outer envelope with the trust's details and logo, return envelope options and patient information sheet options.

✓ Improved patient care

An easy-to-use kit provided by the GP reduced confusion and increases the likelihood of correct sample collection.

✓ Reduced administrative burden

Previously, when samples were sent away for testing:

- ▶ Leicester staff had minimal visibility of sample location when requesting clinicians needed results
- ▶ Some patients took months to return a suitable sample. Historically, rejected samples triggered an automatic reissue of kits by the external laboratory. UHL then had to manually enter the results from the external laboratory into their LIMS
- ▶ Staff spent approximately two hours per day manually entering results due to the volume of reissued kits from the external laboratory

Managing Challenges: Reduction of Rejection Rates

Like many FIT service providers, UHL have faced some challenges with FIT kit return quality.

The main reasons for rejection may include:

- ▶ Incorrect sample collection
- ▶ Missing patient identification or test request forms (caused major delays in processing and reporting)
- ▶ Unlabelled sample collection devices

UHL processes approximately 180–200 FIT samples per day, an increase of around 30 samples within the last year. Before going live with their in house FIT service, the Trust experienced rejection rates of around 7% (10–15 samples per day). This has now been reduced to under 3% (4–6 samples per day).

However, rejected samples are not left unmanaged; UHL now has an efficient system in place using their LIMS to

trace request forms and report rejected samples on the day of receipt. This helps minimise repeat delays and maintain smooth patient pathways.

High Performance and Reliability with the HM-JACKarc Analysers

University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust operates two HM-JACKarc analysers in parallel, maintaining a consistent daily testing throughput. Kalpna highlighted the strong usability of the systems:

“They're simple and user friendly – I enjoy running the analysers.”

The Trust also benefits from Alpha Laboratories dedicated technical support. Kalpna recalled that when the team experienced minor barcode scanning issues, Alpha's local technical specialist responded quickly and worked closely with the laboratory staff to troubleshoot the problem and identify an effective solution, successfully resolving the issue completely.

Kalpna emphasised:

“(RE:Alpha Labs) They are always responsive and helpful.”

A Continued Partnership That Supports Improved Patient Pathways

University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust's transition to in-house FIT testing, supported by Alpha Laboratories FIT kits, The Alpha Portal, the HM-JACKarc analyser and its technical support team, showcases what a tailored and modernised FIT service can achieve.



University Hospitals Leicester analysers