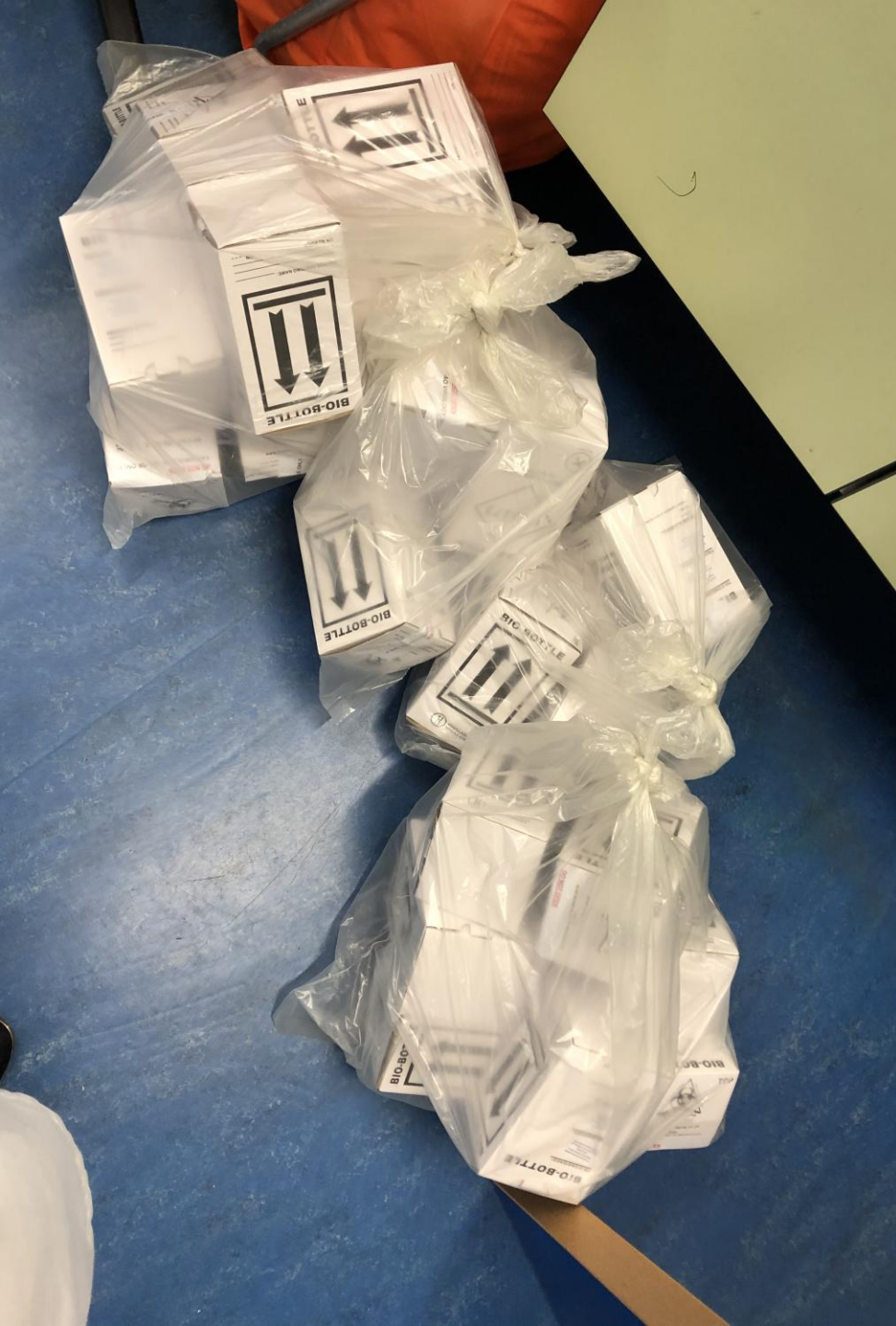


‘LOCKED DOWN’ IN A VIROLOGY LAB

Marianne Cunningham

ABOUT ME

- Honours Degree in Forensic Biology
- Joined Virology for NHS Lothian in 2016 as a Healthcare Scientist Associate Practitioner
- Carried out top-up modules
- Promoted to a Band 5 Trainee Biomedical Scientist
- Completed my IBMS Competency portfolio
- Promoted to a Band 6 Annex U Specialist Biomedical Scientist and undertaking my Specialist Portfolio in Virology



THE BEGINNING

- Virology carry-out viral testing for NHS Lothian and surrounding areas
- No available testing for COVID in January
- All samples handled in a Category 3 containment lab
- Italy out-break increased sample numbers
- No longer feasible to send away and we needed our own test
- Promoted to a Biomedical Scientist

ADAPTING TO THE 'NEW' NORMAL

- Changes to sample handling and testing
- Larger testing capacity implemented
- New testing methods/instruments
- New staff to train
- Additional shifts and longer hours
- Daily changes within the lab
- Multi-disciplinary effort

LIFE AS A TRAINEE

- Big increase in the learning curve
- Amplified training plan to meet the needs of the department
- Adapting to new responsibilities including managerial responsibilities
- Undertaking IBMS Competency portfolio while training team were seconded back to lab
- Completing portfolio and verification on video-call
- Increased pressure in role to support the needs of the department



SECOND WAVE

- Changes to priority testing measures
- New strain with S-Gene drop-out and concern over the current available testing
- Increase in sample numbers due to higher transmission of new strain
- Need to increase testing capacity
- Back to usual pre-pandemic service
- Less multi-disciplinary support
- More new staff= more training
- Beginning the Specialist Portfolio
- Promotion to Band 6 Annex U

ACHIEVEMENTS





NEW LAB

East Region COVID Hub for care home testing

Training on a building site

New instruments and new way to work

Whole new staffing team

New difficulties associated with a new building

Pressure from the Government resulted in time constraints

SUMMARY

- Many challenges from staffing, increase in testing capacity and new way to work
- Increased amount of pressure and strain on already struggling department
- Over 200,000 COVID tests by mid-December
- A better and strong team before and much like a family