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Event: Potential shortfall in supply of purified protein derivative (PPD) and temporary restriction of ordering via ImmForm

Notified by: Esther Robinson, Head of TB Unit, UKHSA
Maria Stavridou, Head of Vaccines and Immunisation Programmes, UKHSA

Authorised by: *Carole Boulton, Deputy Director, Vaccine Programmes and Operations*
Richard Pebody, Director Epidemic Emerging Infections
Ed Wynne-Evans Strategic, Response Director on Call
Olivia Crawford, Communications
David Pearce, Regional Deputy Director Health Protection Regions

Contact: *tbunit@ukhsa.gov.uk*

Incident Response Plan (IRP) Level: *n/a*

Incident Lead: *n/a*

Distribution: Please see page 4 for information with regards to the distribution instructions for this Briefing Note.

Summary:

- There is a potential shortfall in central supply of a diagnostic skin test, purified protein derivative (PPD), which is used for the diagnosis of tuberculosis (TB) infection. This potential shortage period could last until April 2027, when further supplies are expected.
- TB and vaccine services are asked to limit the use of PPD where possible in the coming months, for example through using interferon gamma release assays (IGRA) tests where clinically appropriate.
- PPD should be prioritised for indications in children aged 5 years or under where it may not be possible to use IGRA for technical and logistic reasons.
- Actions are being taken to limit ordering of PPD to try to ensure supplies are available for the most important indications above and where no alternative is available. Priority will be given for PPD being used in children aged 5 years and under for the diagnosis of TB infection.

- PPD should not be used for occupational health screening or in adults for TB infection screening during this period of shortage. IGRA tests can be used for these indications.

Background and interpretation:

Purified protein derivative (PPD) is used to diagnose tuberculosis (TB) infection. The indications for its use are set out in [Immunisation against infectious disease: the Green Book, chapter 32](#).

PPD is used primarily to diagnose TB infection in children, particularly those aged 5 years and under. It may also be used in adults, although interferon gamma release assay (IGRA) testing offers a more sensitive and specific alternative.

UKHSA supplies PPD free of charge to TB services and other healthcare providers. Orders are placed through ImmForm.

Demand for PPD increased significantly during 2026. As a result, supplies are expected to fall short of forecast demand between now and April 2027, when further supplies are expected.

To manage the potential shortfall and prioritise PPD for services using it in children aged 5 years and under, the following ordering controls will be introduced through ImmForm:

- removing ordering access from accounts held by private providers;
- restricting orders for occupational health purposes; and
- capping orders from remaining eligible accounts at two packs per week.

Before an account query can be escalated to the TB Unit, the requester must provide:

- details of the service provided;
- the reason PPD is required; and
- the anticipated level of patient activity requiring PPD.

The ImmForm Team will review requests. Where eligibility is clear, ordering access may be reinstated directly. More complex requests will be referred to clinical colleagues in the TB Unit for a decision.

Eligible services should order PPD only where there is a clear clinical need and should manage stock carefully to minimise wastage.

Implications and Recommendations for UKHSA Regions:

Health Protection teams should be aware that there is an anticipated shortfall in supply of PPD which may impact on contact tracing for TB. Local teams may receive enquires relating to controls placed on ordering PPD.

Implications and Recommendations for UKHSA sites and services:

There may be an increase in demand to laboratories for Interferon gamma release Assays (IGRA), a result of the shortfall in supply of PPD.

Implications and Recommendations for NHS:

NHS services are asked to note the supply issues and should only request stock where there is a clear clinical requirement and should continue to manage stock carefully to minimise wastage.

It is recognised that NHS TB services may not easily be able to change from using PPD to an alternative method of diagnosing TB infection such as interferon gamma release assays. Individual requests for extra stock will be assessed on a case- by case basis to try to ensure there is no shortfall.

There may be an increase in demand to laboratories for Interferon gamma release Assays (IGRA) a result of the shortfall in supply of PPD

Implications and Recommendations for Devolved Administrations

Devolved administration colleagues are asked to note the supply issues and cascade the information to relevant services. It is recognised that Scottish Health Boards may need access to quantities above the cap being instituted due to their delivery model, so we will remain flexible where justified.

References or Sources of information:

[Tuberculosis: the green book, chapter 32 - GOV.UK](#)

[National Institute of Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\) TB guidance](#)

[British Association of Paediatric Tuberculosis clinical guidance](#)

Instructions for Cascade:

Briefing Notes are routinely cascaded to the below groups:

- UKHSA Private Office Groups who cascade onwards within Groups
- UKHSA Health Protection in Regions:
 - UKHSA Field Services
 - UKHSA Health Protection Teams including UKHSA Regional Deputy Directors
 - Deputy Directors in Regions Directorate
- UKHSA Lab Management Teams
- UKHSA Regional Communications
- Generic inbox for each of the Devolved Administrations
- Inboxes for each of the Crown Dependencies
- UKHSA UKOT Programme SPOC
- DHSC CMO
- OHID Regional Directors of Public Health
- National NHSE Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR)
- NHSE National Operations Centre
- **Devolved Administrations** to cascade to Medical Directors and other DA teams as appropriate to their local arrangements.
- **UKHSA Regional Deputy Directors** to cascade to Directors of Public Health
- **UKHSA microbiologists** to cascade to non-UKHSA labs (NHS labs and private)
- **UKHSA microbiologists** to cascade to NHS Trust infection leads
- **NHS labs/NHS infection leads/NHS microbiologists/NHS infectious disease specialists** to cascade to TB services
- Faculty of Occupational Medicine -
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health -
- Royal College of Pathologists -
- Royal College of Physicians -
- Faculty of Public Health -
- NHS Immunisation Team (for BNs relating to immunisation or vaccination programmes) -