

UK Health Security Agency - Open call for evidence
Tuberculosis National Action Plan 2026 - 2031

Learning from previous action to reduce TB

Which of the achievements of current Tuberculosis action plan for England are the most important to prioritise and build upon in the next TB national action plan? (Select up to 3)

- Improved the quality, accessibility, and insights on TB data and trends of real-time data published in quarterly reports, enhanced analysis in the Annual TB Report and local TB epidemiological data available on Fingertips
- Publication of a toolkit for tackling TB in inclusion health groups
- Publication of the Getting it Right the First Time (GIRFT) National TB report
- Improved surveillance through the roll out of the National TB Surveillance System
- Supported the TB nursing workforce through increased engagement
- Enhanced contact tracing capabilities through technology including Whole Genome Sequencing
- Developed a TB Communications toolkit

Building on success

To help us understand and set our priorities, please explain your selections from the previous question.

Achievements of current Tuberculosis action plan for England:

- improved the quality, accessibility, and insights on TB data and trends of real-time data published in quarterly reports, enhanced analysis in the Annual TB Report and local TB epidemiological data available on Fingertips
- publication of a toolkit for tackling TB in inclusion health groups
- publication of the Getting it Right the First Time (GIRFT) National TB report
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Explain your response to the previous question (optional)

Please add any supporting evidence for the previous question [250 words max]

Being able to recognise and target at-risk patients is the most important goal. To ensure there is adequate awareness and support within the healthcare system of the process of action for recognising and managing these at-risk patient.

Additionally, the ability and support to report suspected or confirmed TB cases to the local health department promptly is imperative.

Moreover, it is important to locate and link patients who are not within the health system – i.e. homeless, substance abuse, etc. Assure these patients who are positive do complete treatment and enable access to pharmaceuticals easily.

The 5 UKHSA and NHSE priorities

In 2021, UKHSA and NHSE published the current joint national action plan for England. This focused on 5 main priorities:

1. Recovery from COVID-19
2. Prevent TB
3. Detect TB
4. Control TB disease
5. Workforce

What are the current challenges to TB control, detection and prevention in England? (optional)

Please insert supportive evidence where possible. [250 words max].

We believe, the current challenges include:

- Targeting the most at risk groups
- The recognition of TB symptoms
- Available resources or clinics for patients to attend
- Appropriate vaccination in a timely manner for babies born to high-risk parents

How should the government go further to improve the prevention, detection and control of TB in England? (optional)

Please insert supporting evidence of good practice and effective action for specific population groups, using measurable outcomes and indicators. [250 words max].

To improve TB prevention, detection, and control in England, the government should focus on enhanced screening in high-risk groups, robust contact tracing, and public education to reduce stigma. Strengthening access to timely treatment, supporting adherence, and addressing drug-resistant TB are crucial, as well as tackling social determinants like housing and living conditions.

Additionally, investment in research for new diagnostics and vaccines, alongside improving healthcare worker training and public health infrastructure, will further strengthen efforts.

Collaborative international efforts and a data-driven approach to monitoring TB trends will also play a key role in reducing the burden of the disease. A study in *The British Medical Journal* found that healthcare worker training and awareness significantly improved early diagnosis and treatment initiation for TB cases. Well-trained health professionals can detect symptoms more reliably, leading to quicker interventions and reduced disease spread (Dye et al., 2017).

Studies show that individuals from high-incidence countries (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa, parts of Asia) and other vulnerable populations (e.g., homeless individuals, those with HIV and those in secure environments) are at higher risk for TB and should be routinely screened. Research has shown that contact tracing can prevent a significant portion of new infections when promptly implemented (WHO, 2017). WHO also reports that timely diagnosis and treatment are essential for reducing TB transmission and improving outcomes, particularly in the context of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) (WHO, 2020).

Is there anything else you want to tell the government about the next 5-year national action plan for TB?

[250 words max] (optional)

The NICE tuberculosis (TB) guidelines (NG33) were published in January 2016 (nearly 10 yrs ago) and there is a need for a comprehensive update to them in line with global recommendations and current NHS TB care and management.

At the recent NICE Prioritisation Board having reviewed the guidelines they stated that the "Prioritisation Board recognised that this is an important topic but that other agencies may be better placed to develop guidance on this topic. Additionally, it was mentioned that NICE will liaise with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) to explore options as to how guidance should be developed on this topic.

We urge the agencies involved, to prioritise this area and make a serious collaborative effort to support clinicians with the best and most up to date evidence.

End of consultation