



UK Health
Security
Agency

Investigating and managing outbreaks of sexually transmitted infections: Operational guidance

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Yorkshire and Humber STI Workshop, 13 December 2023

Background

- Previous guidance published in January 2017
 - Lacked specific recommendations for data monitoring
- UKHSA evidence review in 2021/22
 - Published and unpublished STI outbreak investigations
 - Clear variation in practice during outbreak investigations
 - Lack of clarity in definitions & responsibilities
 - Need for updated recommendations for best practice
- Intended to align new guidance with national SH action plans
- January 2023 revision to the guidance started
- April 2024: planned publication of revised guidance



Protecting and improving the nation's health

Managing outbreaks of Sexually Transmitted Infections

Operational guidance

Aim & scope of the guidance

- Support the detection, investigation, and control of STI outbreaks and the development of local STI outbreak control strategies
- Not intended to provide a complete manual - provides guidance on the major steps, processes and considerations
- Highlights STI-specific issues (and references general outbreak management guidance)
- Who it's for:
 - 1. UKHSA Health Protection Teams and Field Service teams
 - 2. Clinics/SHS
 - 3. SHS commissioners

Key recommendations

- Broad attendance at local and regional SH network meetings
- Regular review of STI data sources (collaboratively)
 - Looking at all available data & resources
 - Assessment of exceedances: logging, communicating
 - Regular review of diagnoses by SHS
- Prompt communications
 - Outcomes of exceedance reviews & investigations
 - Informing regional and national colleagues
 - Communication of findings/learning
- Epidemiological investigations
 - Consistent definitions

Recommendations for data monitoring

- Regular data reviews to systematically assess data
 - Commissioners
 - Providers
 - Local authority public health teams
 - UKHSA
- Agree frequency
- Agree sign-off process
- Consider sub-populations of interest, e.g. GBMSM
- Agree communication pathways
 - Use of outbreak notification forms

Assessment of exceedances

- Number of considerations for data reviews
 - Are the diagnoses within a specific population or geographical location?
 - Is the increase in diagnoses above that normally expected and cannot be explained by changes in testing?
 - Has there been a change in the population at risk that could explain increased diagnoses?
 - Is there a cluster of treatment failures in time, a geographical location or a specific population subgroup?
 - Is there a cluster of infections where there was a change in clinical presentation or severity?
- Further investigation may require review by a multi-disciplinary group

Next steps for the guidance

- External review (January)
- Final internal sign-off (February)
- Publication on gov.uk (March)

UKHSA guidance working group

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