



**Briefing Note**

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**Event: Hepatitis B vaccine supplies have improved - vaccine now available for all indications**

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**PHE NIRPL:** National Standard Incident

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**Incident Director:** Mary Ramsay

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### **Background and Interpretation**

Since mid-2017 the UK has experienced a shortage of hepatitis B vaccine due to global manufacturing issues. In response, PHE declared a National Enhanced Incident in August 2017 and developed [temporary recommendations](#) on hepatitis B vaccine use including risk-based prioritisation of vaccine, dose-sparing and deferral of boosters.

In March 2018, as supplies were forecast to improve over the coming year, a [recovery plan](#) to support phased re-introduction of vaccine for lower risk groups was published, with vaccine ordering opened for household contacts and occupational groups at risk of hepatitis B exposure over the course of the year.

Please refer to Briefing Notes 2018/013 published on 16th March 2018, 2017/035 published on 7th August 2017, and 2017/033 published on 25th July 2017 for background information (see references).

### **New changes**

GSK are now confident that planned supplies of adult and paediatric vaccine (Engerix B®) and renal vaccine (Fendrix®) are now sufficient to supply the entire UK market. Combined hepatitis A and B vaccine vaccines (Twinrix® and Ambirix®) remain in good supply.

MSD UK expects current supplies of adult vaccine (HBvaxPRO™ 10mcgs) to last until October 2018 after which supplies will not resume until 2020. Supplies of HBvaxPRO™ 5mcgs and limited supplies of HBvaxPRO™ 40mcgs remain available via AAH, the MSD nominated wholesaler.

In view of overall improvement in UK supply, PHE and DHSC have agreed to accelerate the phased re-introduction of vaccine outlined in the recovery plan, so that vaccine is now available for all priority groups 1 to 4 (as defined in the temporary recommendations).

This means that:



a) vaccine can now be ordered for all health and social care clinical and non-clinical staff and healthcare students who are at risk of blood and body fluid exposure, including for groups where vaccine ordering was due to open in late summer to early autumn.

b) vaccine is also now available for travel. The [National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) website provides indications for hepatitis B vaccination prior to travel. Combined hepatitis A/B vaccine is the preferred first line choice for travellers.

c) to prevent excessive stockpiling and to ensure backlog or catch up vaccination can continue, some ordering restrictions will remain in place. If a vaccine order cannot be fulfilled by one manufacturer, the purchaser should check with another.

As forecasts are dependent on expected deliveries and sales, we will continue to monitor the situation and update as required.

The incident has now been de-escalated from a PHE national enhanced to national standard incident.

To note, the February 2018 advice by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), that boosters (priority group 5) will no longer be routinely required in healthy, immunocompetent adults who have completed a primary course of vaccine, including healthcare workers who are known responders, remains extant. Chapter 18 of the [Green Book: Immunisation against Infectious Disease](#) is being updated to reflect this change.

## Communications

This update is published on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints> and on the [NaTHNaC](#) website.

Communications have also been sent to national NHS and non-NHS occupational health network leads for cascade to members. **A template letter for PHE Centres** to disseminate locally is appended should they wish to ensure that local providers and commissioners are informed.

## Supply updates

PHE continues to publish manufacturer stock updates in Vaccine Update:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-update>.

GSK and MSD supply teams post up-to-date information on their manufacturers' websites and via their email updates to registered customers.

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## Implications and Recommendations to PHE Centres

PHE Centres may receive additional queries regarding availability of vaccines and most recent advice.

PHE Centre HPTs, Alcohol and Drugs leads, Health and Justice leads, and Sexual Health Facilitators are advised to be aware of the update and cascade information locally as deemed appropriate. The appended **template letter** can be used to share with local providers and commissioners.



Non-urgent queries regarding clinical prioritisation and advice can be emailed to [immunisation.lead@phe.gov.uk](mailto:immunisation.lead@phe.gov.uk)

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### Implications and Recommendations to Local Authorities

Local authorities (LA) are advised to be aware of the update and to inform contracted providers of GUM, sexual health, community drug services and occupational health providers for LA staff.

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### References/ Sources of information

1. Immunisation against Infections Disease (the Green Book) Department of Health (2006). Hepatitis A Chapter 18  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-the-green-book-chapter-18>
2. Immunoglobulin Handbook Hepatitis B  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/327768/Hepatitis\\_B\\_immunoglobulin\\_Oct\\_2008.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/327768/Hepatitis_B_immunoglobulin_Oct_2008.pdf)
3. The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC)  
<http://nathnac.net/#/>
4. Temporary hepatitis B vaccine recommendations during supply constraints  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints>
5. What to do if you have to wait for a dose of hepatitis B vaccine: advice for patients  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints>
6. Addendum: new vaccine prioritisation for those travelling to countries with intermediate or high prevalence of hepatitis B  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints>
7. Plan for phased re-introduction of hepatitis B vaccine for lower priority groups in 2018  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints>
8. Past briefing notes on the hepatitis B vaccine shortage:  
<http://phenet.phe.gov.uk/Our-Organisation/Health-protection-briefings/Briefing%20notes%202018/Update-on-hepatitis-B-vaccine-shortage.pdf>  
<http://phenet.phe.gov.uk/Our-Organisation/Health-protection-briefings/Briefing%20notes%202017/Hepatitis-B-Vaccine-Supply-Update.pdf>  
<http://phenet.phe.gov.uk/Our-Organisation/Health-protection-briefings/Briefing%20notes%202017/Global-hepatitis-B-vaccine-shortage.pdf>



## Appendix: Template letter for local use by PHE Centres

Dear

### **Re: update on availability of hepatitis B vaccines following recent shortages**

Since mid-2017 the UK experienced a shortage of hepatitis B vaccine due to global manufacturing issues. In response, PHE published [temporary recommendations](#) on hepatitis B vaccine use including risk-based prioritisation of vaccine, dose-sparing and deferral of boosters.

In March 2018, as supplies were forecast to improve over the coming year, a [recovery plan](#) to support phased re-introduction of vaccine for lower risk groups was published.

**Supplies have now improved as a manufacturer is confident that they have sufficient supplies of adult, paediatric, renal and combination hepatitis A/B vaccine for the entire UK market.**

In view of overall improvement in UK supply, **vaccine is now available for all patients**, including those in lower priority groups such as household contacts, health and social care clinical and non-clinical staff, and travellers. Combined hepatitis A/B vaccine is preferred for travellers.

If a vaccine order cannot be fulfilled by one manufacturer, the purchaser should check with another. Providers are advised to order vaccine responsibly and not to stockpile. Some ordering restrictions will remain in place to ensure backlog or catch up vaccination can continue.

Communications have been sent to NHS and non-NHS occupational health network leads for cascade. This update is published on the gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints> and the [NaTHNaC](#) website.

The situation is being monitored and PHE will continue to publish manufacturer stock updates in Vaccine Update: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-update>. GSK and MSD supply teams post up-to-date information on their manufacturers' websites and via their email updates to registered customers.

Kind regards,