

# T-SPOT<sup>®</sup> TB

*New entrant latent tuberculosis infection  
screening in the UK*

## *Case study – Bradford District Care Foundation Trust*



# Implementing latent tuberculosis infection screening through a central hub with multiple clinics



In 2015, NHS England set up the **Collaborative Tuberculosis Strategy** for England to control the spread of tuberculosis (TB). Through this programme, Bradford District Care Foundation Trust received funding to screen between **600 and 750 patients per year for latent tuberculosis infection (LTBI)** since 2015.

Kath Helliwell and Joanne Taylor have been closely involved in setting up and executing the Bradford screening programme.

**Kath Helliwell:**  
Head of Long Term Conditions,  
Bradford CCG

**Joanne Taylor:**  
Team Leader Homeless & New  
Arrivals Health Team, Bradford  
District Care Foundation Trust

Large-scale screening for LTBI has the potential to make a sizeable impact on people's lives in cities such as Bradford. The city has a young, transient population with high levels of immigration, which means levels of TB are likely to be higher than the national average. For the local TB team, efficient clinics and receiving the most up-to-date records on new entrants to the city helps to ensure high screening numbers.

## Strategies for success

Joanne and Kath agree that the high screening numbers largely come as a result of two key strategies:

- 1 Contacting patients directly using Flag 4 data.** This avoids the reliance on GP referrals to identify eligible patients and provides up-to-date patient information.
- 2 Creating a central hub** for all patient data and sorting eligible patients into **targeted clinics** for students, immigrants and asylum seekers.

### Strategy 1 – Flag 4 data for regularly updated patient information

Flag 4 is a record of all new GP registrations for patients coming from abroad, delivered monthly to the team. It has been crucial in identifying patients that are eligible for LTBI. Before the Flag 4 data was available, the TB team relied mainly on e-referrals from GP practices. However, referring a patient to the TB team takes GP practices time and effort and it quickly became evident that large numbers of clients were missed when relying on e-referrals alone, as not all GP practices were equally engaged with the screening programme.

It was therefore critical that the latest Flag 4 data, which requires no additional GP involvement, reached the TB team in a timely manner. With over 700 clients screened per year, it has helped the Bradford screening figure become one of the highest in the country.

Joanne explains:

Flag 4 data lists the clients that come into the country and register with a GP; it is emailed to us every month. Our administrator is then able to go through the data to pick out and sort clients that are eligible for the LTBI programme and invite them to one of our clinics. This data has been crucial in reaching so many eligible clients.

### Strategy 2 – Targeted clinics for more efficient screening

After receiving the latest patient information through Flag 4, the other key strategy that the Bradford TB screening team employs is to sort clients into three targeted clinics: students, immigrants and asylum seekers. This split is necessary as the three groups have different needs when it comes to organising a clinic.

For example, asylum seekers are often vulnerable and require more assistance during appointments, such as a translation service. This service is available to the TB team, but it means appointment slots need to be longer – typically 20 minutes. In contrast, immigrants and students usually either speak English or bring a family member, enabling the team to allocate 7-minute slots.

Student clinics are seasonal and the team has the assistance of the university welfare officer, who invites students to screening by email. This is not only a more effective method of communication for this group, but also avoids the data protection issues associated with contacting students directly via email.

As Joanne notes, the administrator of the TB team plays a vital role in the programme by sorting eligible clients into groups. This classification has proved pivotal to the number of clients that the team can screen.

For those looking to set up a screening programme, the Bradford team advises to make optimal use of regular Flag 4 data and to sort clients into groups – as well as sharing experiences with other teams in the region.

Kath concludes:

We have an excellent network across West Yorkshire. We've discussed the use of Flag 4 and sorting clients in groups, which highlighted the fact that not every team was getting regular data and helped us rectify that.

## Simple testing, timely results



To ensure quick and accurate screening for LTBI, the Bradford TB team uses Oxford Immunotec's T-SPOT®.TB test. Kath says: "We've consistently used it and we've found it to be a really simple, easy-to-use test. Processing is very timely and results always come back within two days."

Aside from supplying the tests and analysing the results, Oxford Immunotec also provided training and support to the Bradford TB team. Joanne comments: "They've been very helpful to our team, if we ever have any problems or queries I either phone or email, and the response is always quick. It was also really useful that Oxford Immunotec organised a refresher on phlebotomy; if you haven't done it for a few years, it can be quite daunting, so it was good that they came and showed us that."

## Exceeding targets



The success of this screening programme setup at Bradford so far has been impressive. In the first year of the funding (2015–16), Bradford reached and exceeded their target of 600 clients screened. In total, the team tested **670 clients**, with around **20% testing positive**; all of these were successfully referred for treatment.

Encouraged by this success, the Bradford team applied for funding to screen **750 patients per year** in the following years. In 2017–18, they once again exceeded their target with **760 clients screened in 11 months**. **15%** of clients tested positive and were offered treatment.

## Moving forward

With NHS funding for LTBI screening available, the Bradford TB team are optimistic about bringing down the incidence of TB in the city even further. For 2018–19, the team has put in a bid to screen **900 patients** – with the option to increase, if necessary.

For those looking to set up a screening programme, the Bradford team advises to make optimal use of regular Flag 4 data, to sort clients into groups and to share experiences with other teams in the region.

Kath concludes:

“It’s fantastic that we have Flag 4, we can share our experiences with other teams and run the service as efficiently as it is being run now. For me, it’s like a jigsaw, there are all these pieces that fit together, and it’s made the service as successful as it is.”

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