UK Health Security Agency

New CDI risk factor questions on the HCAI Data Capture System (DCS)

Guidance for DCS users

September 2026

Background

The *Clostridioides difficile* infection (CDI) surveillance dataset in the healthcare-associated infections Data Capture System (HCAI DCS) was established in 2007 and has not been substantively reviewed since. Over the last 18 months, the UKHSA, in collaboration with NHSE colleagues, conducted a comprehensive review of the risk factor questions (Appendix A, Table A1) to ensure they remain relevant and aligned with current clinical practice, surveillance needs and infection prevention priorities. Following the review, the new questions were piloted with DCS users across 15 NHS acute trusts and further refined in response to their feedback.

The new revised minimum dataset focuses on risk factors associated with the patient and their episode of care. Improving completeness and accuracy of these fields will help build a clearer national understanding of the modifiable and patient-level drivers of CDI.

The new CDI risk factor questions aim to support:

- better identification of emerging trends and associated risk factors
- more targeted infection prevention interventions
- improved capability to evaluate the impact of stewardship and prevention efforts

Prior to their launch on the DCS, the new questions were presented at an HCAI DCS stakeholder forum event held in July 2026.

If you have any questions about the CDI risk factor questions, please contact us via mandatory.surveillance@ukhsa.gov.uk.

About the new CDI risk factor questions

Launch information

The new questions will go live on the DCS on **Wednesday 17 September 2026**. Please note that:

- **for new cases entered after the questions have launched**: the new risk factor questions will be displayed on the ‘Risk Factors’ tab, and the previous risk factor questions will not be displayed

- **for old cases entered before the questions have launched**: only the previous risk factor questions will be available when old cases are subsequently viewed or updated, and the new questions will not be available.

Will the new questions be mandatory or optional?

Almost all the new CDI risk factor questions will become **mandatory for sign-off by the start of the 2027/28 financial year**, meaning they will need to be completed for every CDI case reported to the DCS. When they are mandatory for sign-off, the only optional questions will be those asking for the end dates of prior antibiotic courses and CDI treatments, as these dates may not yet have occurred when a case is first entered.

However, **when they are introduced on 17 September 2026, all questions will be optional except for the first question**, which asks about prior antibiotic use. This question will be mandatory for sign-off to ensure DCS users visit the new risk factors tab and are aware of the new fields. Introducing them as optional initially will give DCS users time to incorporate the new data requirements into local surveillance processes before mandatory completion is implemented.

The questions have been designed with mandatory completion in mind and include "Unknown" response options, allowing fields to be completed even where the required information is unavailable.

Will the new questions be editable after sign-off?

We plan for the new questions to be editable for 12 months after sign-off in the future. This will enable DCS users to update fields as new risk factor information becomes available.

However, it is not currently possible for questions on the HCAI DCS to remain editable after sign-off in a dynamic way, and this functionality will require development. This means that when the questions launch, they will lock after sign-off, and users will need to email mandatory.surveillance@ukhsa.gov.uk to request that records are unlocked for editing.

Timeline

Event	Date
Comprehensive CDI risk factors review by a UKHSA and NHSE working group	2025 to 2026
New questions piloted with 17 individuals from 15 NHS acute trusts on the HCAI DCS support site	June 2026

New questions presented at an HCAI DCS stakeholder event	9 July 2026
Pilot feedback incorporated into questions	July to August 2026
New questions go live on the HCAI DCS	17 September 2026

New CDI risk factor questions

Table 1 below lists the complete set of new CDI risk factor questions that will be used on the HCAI DCS from 17 September 2026, including completion information and the rationale for inclusion. To see the old CDI risk factor questions, please see Appendix A.

Table 1. New CDI risk factor fields launching September 2026

Field	Completion	Rationale for inclusion
Select the number of different antibiotics that the patient was prescribed (all settings) in the 28 days prior to, and including, the date of positive specimen	Mandatory	Antibiotic therapy is an important risk factor for CDI. Time period extended from 7 days to 28 days prior to specimen date
Antibiotic, setting, date started and date ended	By April 2027: Antibiotic, setting, date started: mandatory, if triggered; date ended: optional Initially: all optional	Allows analysis of which antimicrobials result in increased risk of CDI. Provides greater granularity on the number and type of antibiotics, the settings (primary care, secondary care, dentistry, other or unknown) and timing of antibiotic course
Was the patient prescribed (all settings) a Proton Pump Inhibitor (PPI) in the 28 days prior	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows analysis of trends behind infection risk factors and association with PPIs

to, and including, the date of the positive specimen?		
Was the patient prescribed systemic anti-cancer therapy (SACT) at any point during the 12 months prior to, and including, the date of the positive specimen?	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows analysis of trends behind infection risk factors and association with SACTs
When did the SACT end (use most recent SACT)?	By April 2027: Mandatory, if triggered Initially: optional	Allows analysis of trends behind infection risk factors and association with SACTs
Select the number of treatments that were provided for this episode of CDI	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows assessment of the trends in CDI treatments
Date started, date ended, status, treatment and route of administration	By April 2027: Date started, status, treatment, route: mandatory, if triggered; date ended: optional Initially: all optional	Allows assessment of the trends in CDI treatments, including status (ongoing, completed, or unknown) and route. Date ended can be left blank if the treatment status is ongoing or has an unknown end date
Was there evidence of potential cross-transmission of *C. difficile* in the patient's setting (e.g. ward, care home)?	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows epidemiologic analysis of trends behind infection risk factors
Did the cases have the same *C. difficile* PCR ribotype?	By April 2027: Mandatory, if triggered	Allows linkage with *Clostridioides*

	Initially: optional	*difficile* ribotyping network (CDRN) data
Did the patient have severe or life-threatening infection?	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows epidemiological analysis of infection severity and outcomes
How long after diarrhoea onset was a stool sample sent for *C. difficile* testing?	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows analysis of time between onset of diarrhoea, admission, and date sample taken
If the patient was in hospital, were they placed in appropriate patient placement (e.g. isolation / cohort ward / cohort bay) within 4 hours of their confirmed CDI diagnosis?	By April 2027: Mandatory Initially: optional	Allows analysis of Infection Prevention and Control measures used

Appendix A

For information only, Table A1 below lists the previous CDI risk factor questions that were in use for new cases from 2015 until the new questions were launched on 17 September 2026.

Table A1. Previous CDI risk factor questions on the DCS

Field	Completion
Best estimate of date of onset of diarrhoea	Optional
Was patient on antimicrobials when specimen was taken?	Optional
Select antimicrobials when specimen was taken	Mandatory, if triggered
Was patient on any antimicrobials in the preceding 7 days?	Optional
Select antimicrobials in the preceding 7 days	Mandatory, if triggered
Was the specimen sent for typing?	Optional
Specimen category	Mandatory, if triggered