

Development of a pharmacy-led technical assessment pathway for personal protective equipment

Rachel Huey, Catherine Goudy & Mike Scott
 Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre, Northern Ireland
 Email Contact: rachel.huey@northerntrust.hscni.net Tel: +44 28 944 24942



Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC) utilised pharmacist skills to undertake technical assessment of all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items procured for use across Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI). A technical assessment process was developed in partnership with the Business Services Organisation Procurement and Logistics Service (BSOPaLS) and regional Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) colleagues in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 and escalating demand for PPE.

Process

- MOIC reviewed and validated all technical documentation associated with each PPE product, to ensure that items procured were genuine, fit for purpose and met the relevant standards and regulations.
- Benchtop assessments were carried out by IPC colleagues.
- BSOPaLS carried out all procurement due diligence checks on potential suppliers.
- Some reasons for rejection included documentation deficiencies and misleading labelling.
- The initial assessment process¹ was then refined and evolved into the 7-step technical assessment process shown in Figure 2.

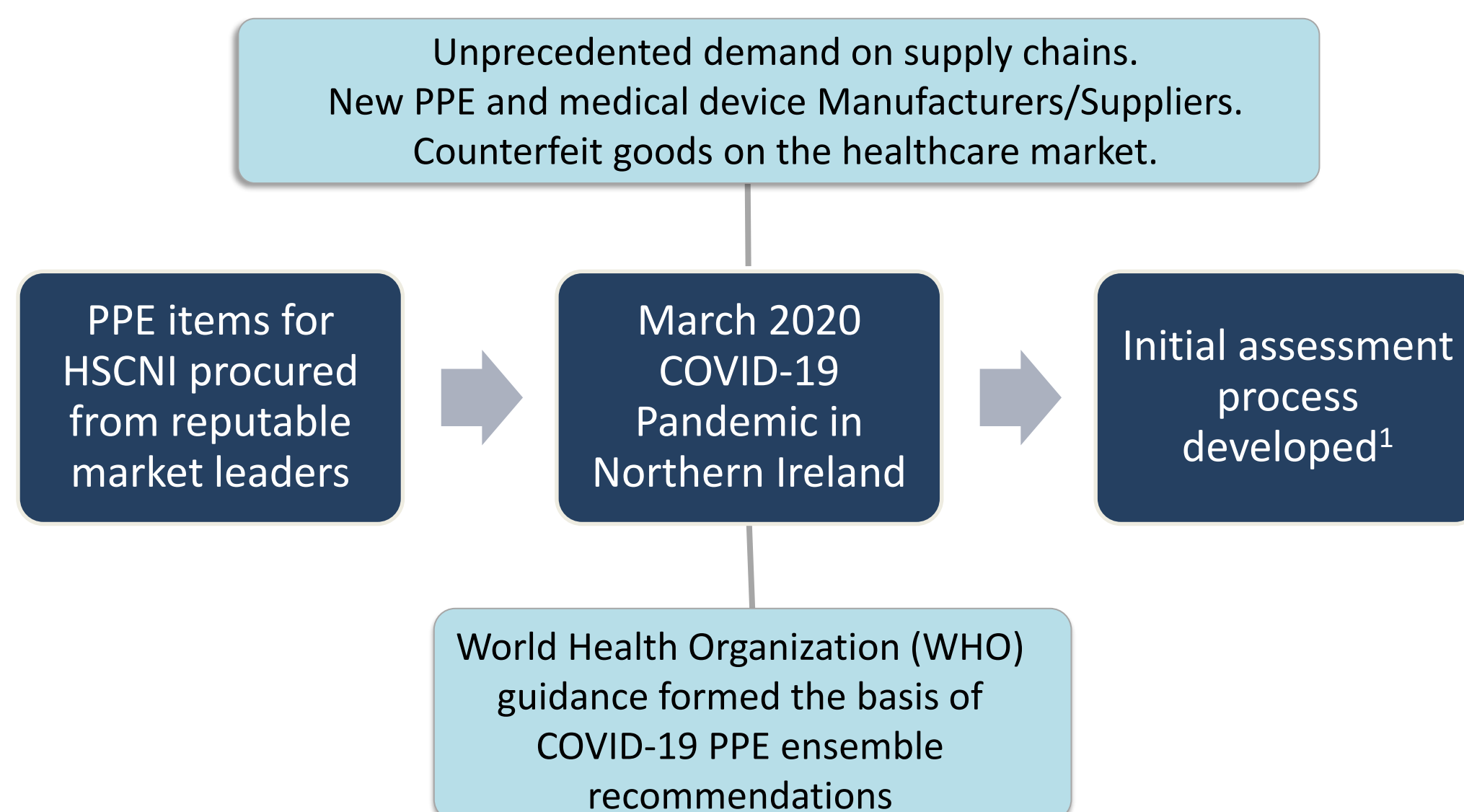


Figure 1. The HSCNI procurement process before and after the global COVID-19 pandemic is declared by WHO in March 2020.

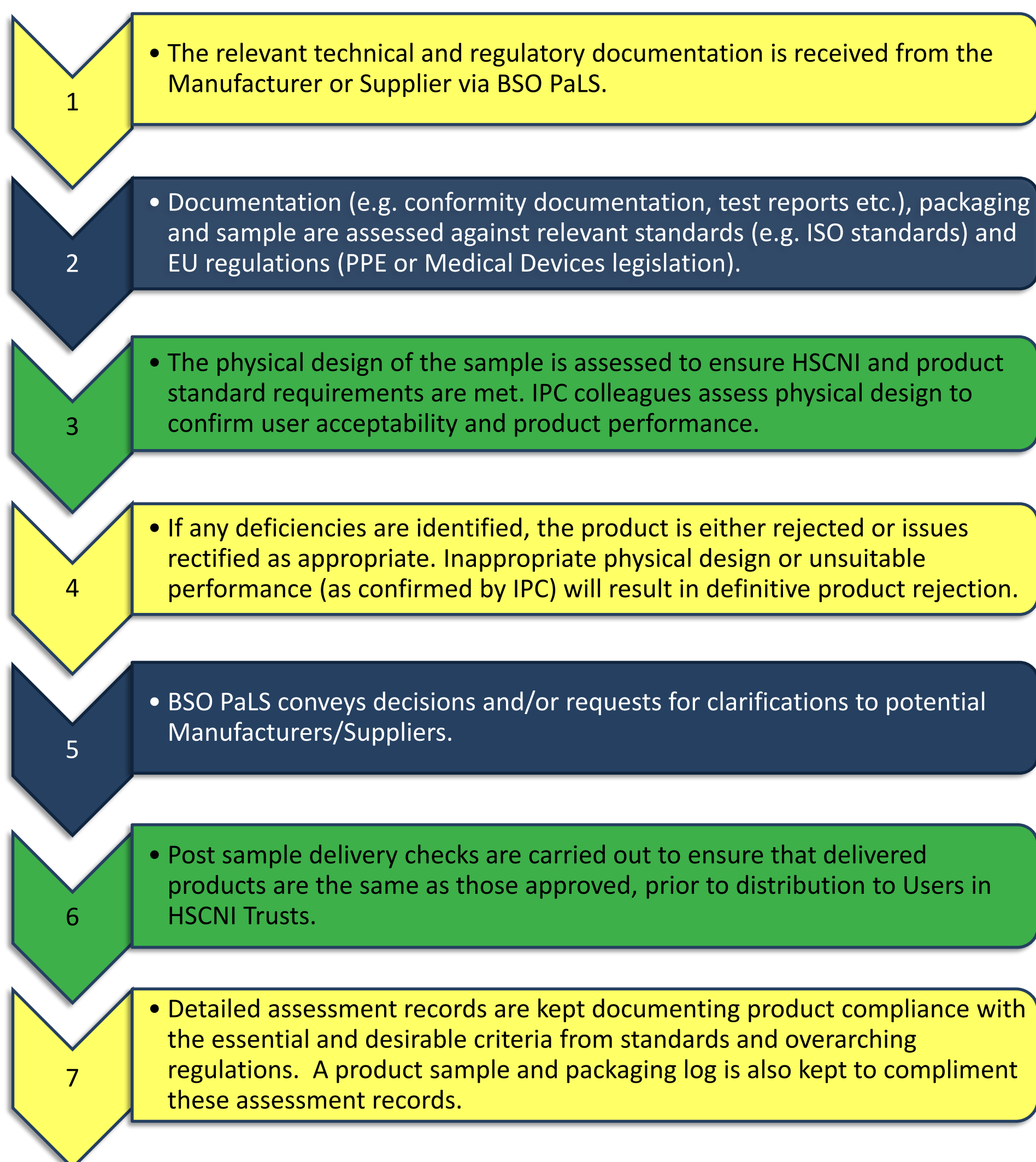


Figure 2. The refined MOIC 7-step technical assessment process for PPE items.

Outcomes & Conclusions

- A total of 205 items have been assessed for compliance between June 2020 and December 2022 (Figure 3). A breakdown of the product type and outcomes are shown in Table 1.
- This process has resulted in procurement of only safe and effective products, putting safety of HSCNI staff and patients at the forefront.
- This process has now been implemented into the PPE procurement pathway for all HSCNI purchases, enabling the application of due diligence in a transparent, robust and evidence-based manner.
- Provided there is opportunity to develop an appropriate knowledge base of the relevant regulations and standards, this process is transferable across many healthcare organisations.

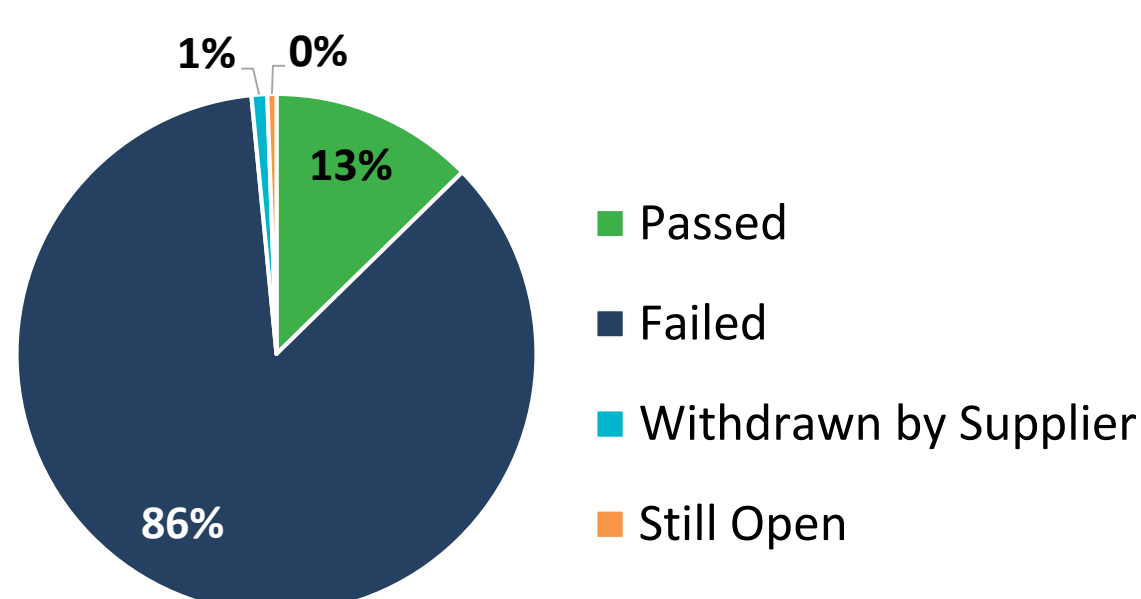


Figure 3. Total assessment outcomes for all PPE products assessed by MOIC between June 2020 – December 2022.

Table 1. Breakdown of PPE items assessed by MOIC and assessment outcomes.

Product type	Total no. assessed	Passed	Failed	Withdrawn by Supplier	Still open
Type IIR Masks	13	7	5	1	0
FPP3 Masks	127	8	119	0	0
Gloves	34	4	30	0	0
Gowns	1	0	1	0	0
Theatre caps	7	3	4	0	0
Transparent Face Masks	6	4	0	1	1
Face Shields	17	0	17	0	0

References

1. Burnett K, Martin S, Goudy C, et al. Ensuring the quality and quantity of personal protective equipment (PPE) by enhancing the procurement process in Northern Ireland during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic: Challenges in the procurement process for PPE in NI. *Journal of Patient Safety and Risk Management*. 2022;27(1):42-49. doi:10.1177/25160435211057385.

