

5 March 2019

## EU Exit and NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT)

NHSBT is continuing to establish contingency arrangements to mitigate any potential impacts on its products and services which may arise following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, including in a potential no deal scenario.

NHSBT is leading on the preparation for EU Exit for blood and organs and is integrated into Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS planning arrangements. NHSBT is also an integrated part of the NHS England (NHSE) arrangements for response, leading on transfusion and transplantation in the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR).

NHSBT collects blood from donors in England and does not export or import outside the United Kingdom for the vast majority of our routine demand for red blood cells, platelets and plasma. We import and export very small numbers of rare red blood units for specific patients. We import from the EU around 6.5% of the plasma units issued in the UK, for patients born after 1996 as a precautionary safety measure against exposure to the risk of vCJD. The vast majority of the UK's organ transplants are carried out with organs from UK donors. Only a small number of transplanted organs from deceased donors, around 0.5% a year, come from European countries.

As an organisation, we are currently planning for all scenarios and NHSBT is taking the necessary measures to evaluate and meet the potential impacts as outlined in the Government's Technical Notices.

In the event of a 'no deal' situation, the Government has said it is possible that there may be significant delays for freight transiting via Dover and Eurotunnel, and possibly other ports. The disruption could also lead to congestion on the strategic road network in Kent. NHSBT is therefore planning for this situation and we will seek to avoid any disruption to the supply of blood components and movement of samples to and from hospitals in that area.

We are largely self-sufficient in blood and blood components and do not export or import these products in large quantities, therefore Hospital Transfusion Laboratories should continue to operate normally, ordering blood and blood components as they do now, and they should not change their stock-holding of blood or blood components. Hospitals should also expect that NHSBT will behave as it does now, including arrangements for reference services, unless Transfusion Laboratories are contacted specifically to change arrangements such as delivery times to respond to local circumstances.

Transplant centres should expect NHSBT to behave in the usual way with current allocation schemes being used to allocate organs. NHSBT is also liaising with the Human Tissue Authority (HTA), to ensure that appropriate agreements are in place with EU organisations to allow for the movement of organs to continue after 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

Tissue products and stem cells should also continue to be ordered / requested as normal. Hospitals should not stockpile tissues.

Other functions provided by NHSBT supporting blood, tissues and organs, such as red cell reagents, reference diagnostics and therapeutic apheresis services will continue as normal.

If new customs arrangements are implemented, NHSBT will seek to avoid any impacts to the continued movement of substances of human origin across borders as required to support clinical need. We have been working with transport providers and partners to ensure continuity of supply.

Safety and sufficiency remain at the forefront of everything NHSBT does. EU Exit will not see this change. We will continue to follow rigorously the relevant regulations and guidelines to protect both donors and patients.

I understand that you may have additional concerns or questions, so I would ask you to direct these through your local Hospital Customer Services Manager so that we can address them. I would also encourage you to liaise with the representative from your Trust on your Local Resilience Forum, who will be reviewing existing business continuity plans, in light of EU Exit.

I can assure you that continuity of supply of our life saving products is our number one priority, whatever the results of EU Exit.

Yours sincerely



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