

NHSBT Research & Development Committee

Annual Board Report 2021/22

19th July 2022

Status: Official

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The R&D Committee has prepared this report for the NHSBT Board to demonstrate how it satisfied its terms of reference during 2021/22.

2. OVERVIEW

The Board has delegated authority to the Committee to provide strategic oversight of an innovative, cohesive, high-quality programme of research and development (R&D) which includes a balance of short and long-term research and meets organisational requirements. The Committee aims for timely translation of research findings into new products and services, to deliver improvements to the efficiency, efficacy and safety of blood, tissues, cellular and organ products and services for donors and patients.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the R&D Committee were last reviewed by the Committee at their meeting in December 2020 and has not been updated since due to the changes to the structure, governance, and management of NHSBT research. As part of Board governance, the ToR are now in need of review and the R&D Governance Office are collating information from other blood/organ/tissue services (national and international). This will be discussed at the R&D Committee meeting in November 2022.

The most recent Chair has stepped down and a new Chair is yet to be appointed.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The Membership at the end of the reporting period was:

Committee Members

Paresh Vyas (Chair of RDC, Non-Executive Director)¹
Piers White (Non-Executive Director)
Deirdre Kelly (Non-Executive Director)
Dana Devine (External Expert – Canadian Blood Services)
Alessandro Rambaldi (External Expert – University of Milan)
Hans Zaaijer (External Expert – Amsterdam University)
Andreas Zuckermann (External Expert – University Vienna)
Ellen van der Schoot (External Expert - Sanquin, The Netherlands)²

Accountable Executives

Rob Bradburn (Finance Director)
Anthony Clarkson (Director of Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation)
Greg Methven (Director of Blood Supply)³

¹ Stepped down as Chair in April 2022

² Last meeting July 2021

³ Last meeting July 2021 / Left NHSBT

Gail Miflin (Chief Medical Officer and Director of Clinical Services)

Observers

Yomi Adegbaaju (National Research Manager)
Shubha Allard (Consultant Haematologist)
Tracey Barr (Interim Strategy Lead)
Mina Chauhan (Finance Business Partner)
John Forsythe (Medical Director – Transplantation)
James Griffin (Medical Director – Cell and Apheresis Gene Therapies)
Rachel Johnson (Assistant Director, Statistics & Clinical Research)
Derek Manas (Medical Director – Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation)
David Roberts (Interim Medical Director – Pathology)
Farrukh (Farrah) Shah (Medical Director – Transfusion)
Stephan Thomas (Associate Director – Technical and Scientific Development)
Shona Yeoman (R&D Office Administrator – Minutes)

4. COMPLIANCE WITH TERMS OF REFERENCE

Formal meetings of the R&D Committee were held on 6th July and 25th November 2021.

5. DUTIES AND FINDINGS

July 2021

Strategic

- Committee members reviewed the ongoing NHSBT strategy development work and agreed that Research and operational business should be aligned in the aims and objectives (improve outcomes for patients) of the corporate strategy. It was also agreed that the role of the R&D Committee is to advise and to ensure R&D activity is fit for purpose. The committee agreed to support with the strategy development and suggested a clear breakdown of strategic objectives and the R&D components needed to fulfil these. Clinical objectives and performance indicators should be included in NHSBT operational performance reporting to align R&D with operations and underpin the importance of research in guiding NHSBT's future direction.
- Committee members reviewed the options proposed for the NHSBT R&D Programme. Overall, the proposed direction of travel was supported, and it was agreed that ongoing distinction between Research and Development was likely to be beneficial, in particular to ensure service improvements do not always take priority over research (which, although having uncertain outcomes by its nature, could lead to 'strategic leaps'). There was support for continuing the current R&D infrastructure funding.
- R&D Financial position was reviewed and approved.
- Funding was awarded to the Whole Blood study (SWIFT) led by NHSBT Principal Investigator Dr Laura Green.
- 3 NHSBT work package extensions were approved:
 - Microbiological safety of blood, tissues and organs led by Samreen Ijaz
 - Ex vivo manipulation for cellular therapies and advanced blood products led by Ash Toye (RESTORE clinical trial post only)
 - Improving outcomes for haematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) recipients led by Simon Mendez-Ferrer

Governance and Assurance

The Committee reviewed progress reports on all active work-packages and projects within the reporting period. Reports that included the achievements and diversity of NHSBT R&D were:

- NHSBT Workpackage progress
- Statistics & Clinical Research update ((a) Clinical Trials Unit, (b) Systematic Review Initiative)
- Component Development Laboratory
- Clinical Research Fellows
- Trust Funds / European Blood Alliance (applications and reports)
- Intellectual Property
- R&D Contracts
- R&D Committee Annual Board Report
- NHSBT/NIHR Blood and Transplant Research Units
- R&D Gap Analysis – June 2021

November 2021

1. An update was given on Strategy and Transformation Programme development work.
2. The Committee reviewed and approved funding for:
 - a. Infrastructure support for Clinical Trials in Transfusion Medicine
 - b. Study looking at the role of extended matching for red cell transfusions to improve outcomes for patients with sickle cell disease (HAEM MATCH).
 - c. 12-month extension for Organ Conditioning Unit study looking at repairing injury and recovering organs for transplantation (WP15 – 07).
 - d. 4-year PhD student to support with Genotyping Array Development
3. The Component Development Laboratory strategy development was presented and supported by committee.
4. The Committee reviewed and accepted progress on the clinical trial of manufactured red cells (RESTORE), confirming their continued support for the trial.
5. The Committee reviewed applications from senior scientists to become NHSBT Principal Investigators, which resulted in two successful applications.
6. Reports reviewed and accepted:
 - a. R&D Finance Report
 - b. Quinquennial Review Gap Analysis assurance
 - c. R&D Contracts Assurance report and noted that reassurance regarding our ability to protect Intellectual Property is needed.
7. The Committee discussed lessons learned from the first round of NIHR Blood and Transplant Research Units and recommendations were suggested for Round 2 applications.
8. The Committee agreed a workplan for future meetings.

6. CONCLUSION

The R&D Committee has complied with its Terms of Reference from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. As part of the general review of Board effectiveness and committees, the R&D Committee will be reviewed this year and may work quite differently in the future, and potentially will no longer report direct to the Board.

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