

NHSBT Board

25 July 2023

UK Government update

The House of Commons rose on 20 July for its summer recess. The House of Lords rises today (25 July). It feels apt to quickly reflect on the last parliamentary session and say a huge thank you to NHSBT for all the close working with us to support our Ministers.

The year included the **amber alert** and working on ways to **increase resilience levels in blood stocks** – we provided an update to Minister O'Brien last week on all the work that is underway in NHSBT and the exciting things to come including the new Donor Centre we heard about in the June Board meeting.

February saw the publication of the long-awaited report from the **Organ Utilisation Group** (OUG) and Minister O'Brien proudly hosted a celebratory reception for the Group on 11 July, hearing some hugely powerful stories from patients about the importance of the recommendations. The **Implementation Group** has now met twice, and we are already seeing some exciting progress across NHSBT and NHSE. We were also thrilled to be able to confirm that **Professor John Forsythe** (formerly Deputy Chair of the OUG) will be co-Chairing the implementation group, alongside William Vineall, Director of NHS Quality, Safety and Investigations, both from within DHSC, demonstrating the importance that the government is placing on this work. The third meeting will be in September.

And in Spring this year, as part of a wider **Reform and Efficiency** exercise across all DHSC Arm's Length Bodies, NHSBT were able to clearly communicate to Ministers how every opportunity is taken to work as efficiently as possible whilst not compromising on the quality and safety of service provided to hospitals and patients across its services.

Then in early June we were able to mark a significant milestone in the **Plasma for Medicines programme** with the appointment of the fractionator. A lot of work is still to be done but this is a great example of NHSBT, NHSE and DHSC working together on a vital programme to secure the supply of key medicines.

Turning to our work with NHSBT on **stem cells**, also in June, **NIHR agreed funding for four research proposals** which will begin later this year. These aim to improve access and outcomes of stem cell transplants, address health inequalities, and promote innovation in the stem cell ecosystem. Ultimately this will lead to better patient outcomes and help pave the way for development and delivery of advanced cell and gene therapies at scale. The projects are:

- NHSBT project on experimental optimisation of methodology for delivering cellular therapies including cryopreservation and developing CAR-T capacity.
- Anthony Nolan proof of principle pilot: collaboration with Indian registry to increase matching and map regional HLA allele and haplotype in India with donors available to UK patients and also worldwide via the World Bone Marrow Association.
- NHSBT led data research project to improve understanding of unmet need and inequity of access to stem cell transplants.
- Anthony Nolan and the wider stem cell community project to develop and carry out the first patient reported outcomes trial in stem cell patients in the UK.

And lastly, we are thrilled to start working with **Dr Jo Farrar** as the permanent CEO and continue the productive working relationship we have had with Wendy and Peter over the past year, with her.