

**NHSBT Public Board Meeting****25 July 2023****Chief Executive's Report****Status: Official**

In my first 6 weeks as Chief Executive I have prioritised my time on getting out and meeting teams across the organisation and learning more about the services NHS Blood and Transplant provides for patients and donors and the challenges and opportunities for the future. The work we do as an organisation is inspiring and I have been privileged to have met many patients and heard first-hand how our services have transformed people's lives.

I have also focussed time on gaining greater insight and understanding of our strategies and areas of focus for the future. My priorities moving forwards will be focussed in three areas:

- i. People – ensuring that all our people are supported to achieve their potential and look forward to coming to work in NHSBT.
- ii. Delivery – providing the highest quality of care for our donors, patients and teams.
- iii. Innovation – continuing to drive innovation forwards across all our services,

I am delighted to announce some Executive team appointments. Following rigorous and competitive processes I have appointed our Paul O'Brien as Blood Supply Director and will be announcing the first Director of Nursing appointment soon. Additionally, when David Rose, Director Donor Experience leaves us at the end of this month, Mark Chambers Deputy Director of Donor Experience will join the Executive team on an interim basis.

**1. People**

The People Directorate is transitioning towards their new structure, with recruitment into many vacant roles. This is enabling development opportunities for some of our staff, and also external appointments to NHSBT. The new operating model will deliver a more directorate focused service across Employee Relations and Recruitment in particular.

This year's Our Voice survey closed on May 17th, and we have analysed the data, which will be presented to Board in a separate agenda item. We have communicated the topline results for NHSBT overall with our people, and each directorate has shared their own results with their teams. At present we are agreeing the three highest priority

areas for corporate action this year and each directorate is supplementing these with locally focused action plans.

Our Forward Together programme focussed on becoming an intentionally inclusive and anti-racist organisation is not progressing at the pace that we or our people would like. The Executive Team carried out a deep dive on the programme and we are now working on identifying the corrective action we need to take to continue the great work that we have started and get this flagship programme on track.

We have made a successful bid to join the London Mayors Anti-Racism initiative, working with 11 other NHS organisations to both develop a tailored approach and learn together.

Most unions have accepted the pay deal that has been offered and industrial action has been halted in the main. With regard to specific Unions, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) ballot for strike action in England was unsuccessful and our understanding is that there is no intention from the RCN to re-ballot at this time. At the same time the ballot for RCN strike action in Wales was paused. We believe there are no further plans to ballot, from Unison, Unite, GMB or the RCN at this time. The British Medical Association do have a mandate for strike action with two days of action planned from 7am Thursday 20 July through to 7am Saturday 22 July – all our planning and preparation within NHSBT suggests that we will be able to manage the impact of strike action on our services.

Work continues to shape our Resolution Framework, which offers an enhanced triage assessment of cases and delivers enhanced levels of objectivity, rigour and fairness giving employees and managers a tailored resolution for each case. It increases the use of early resolution, facilitated conversations restorative justice and mediation. These are proven to deliver lasting and constructive outcomes to complaints and concerns at work. We have a joint working group with our Trade Union colleagues to progress its development so we can improve our approach and policies.

## **2. Finance**

The external audit of the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts has now come to a close with a clean audit outcome. The accounts have been successfully laid before Parliament prior to the summer recess.

The quarter one Finance results, and accompanying forecasts for the year, have now been finalised and we are confident that our funding envelope for 2023/24 remains deliverable. We do though continue to carefully monitor the evolving financial investments for Future Proofing Blood and Collection capacity, plus the Southampton roof, as detailed costing plans are developed.

In parallel to this year's financial look, a detailed funding and pricing model for 2024/25 is being developed along with a long-term view on financial sustainability over the next five years. We will be working closely with stakeholders across the system in preparation for our opening discussions with commissioners in Autumn.

### 3. Service Delivery

We exceeded our deceased organ donor target in the first three months. This is mainly because the pool of potential donors has seen sustained growth for the first time since 2020.

Engagement events have begun as we launched a programme to review and modernise organ retrieval across the UK. This is expected to present our options that help address funding shortfalls and sustainably meet transplant opportunities, though not necessarily both.

Blood stocks have recently held at target levels of approximately 6 days, with some variation by blood group. Collection levels during June have been slightly below target, but demand has also been below forecast which has prevented stocks declining.

To support increased collection, in June we raised the new donor cap to 15% ahead of national Blood week, which helped support an increase in new donor bookings across mobile teams.

The 'Future Proofing Blood' programme continues to deliver its objectives to improve resilience in the blood supply chain. Significant updates include:

- Progression of a new donor centre in Brixton.
- Identification of other potential new donor centre locations.
- Analysis and options appraisal to add platelet stock resilience through smoothing supply by day of week

Therapeutic Apheresis Services (TAS) has started a new service providing autologous stem cell collections for Coventry and Warwickshire Trust. Also, the Oxford Cellular and Molecular Therapies (CMT) lab issued its first Chimeric Antigen Receptor T- cell therapy (CAR-T) product in support of Oxford University Trust's new CAR-T program. All of the CMT labs are now supporting the delivery of licensed CAR-T therapies to NHS patients.

Two Red Cell Immunohaematology labs are now piloting a remote interpretation service with Pathlinks and East and Southeast London Partnership. In the pilot, hospitals do not have to send a blood sample and RCI staff provide remote interpretation of tests undertaken at the hospital. This allows for earlier interpretation of cases and reduce logistics and testing costs across the system.

The Plasma Collection Operation at Reading has relocated to a renovated clinic. The aim is to provide a modern and welcoming environment for donors and staff. The new layout has been designed to add capacity; improve efficiency; and enhance the donor experience: key enablers for attracting and retaining more plasma donors. Construction at the new Birmingham Plasma Donation Centre is progressing; collection operations are on schedule to move to the new site by the end of July. The next phase of the Plasma Programme delivers an increase in the volume of recovered plasma captured for medicines.

## **4. Innovation**

Cellular and Molecular Therapies (CMT) has been awarded a 3 year, £900k National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) grant to investigate improvements in the cryopreservation process for stem cells and CAR-T products and to develop capability in the full manufacturing process of CAR-T cells. The work will be carried out in CMT's Barnsley lab which also recently had a successful MHRA inspection to obtain a Manufacturers (MIA-IMP) Licence.

Last month saw the International Society for Blood Transfusion (ISBT) Congress, with 2000 delegates from over 100 countries. NHSBT was well represented with many talks from our teams. UK Blood Services were also commended by delegates, with reference to daily use of our guidelines.

We have started recruitment to Our Future Health research programme with four blood donation teams to test the end-to-end process, with a plan to progress to roll-out to all blood donation teams after the summer.

A pilot to implement a new Hospice pathway for cornea donation is underway, following research led by NHSBT, NIHR and the University of Southampton. The impact is expected to be modest at this stage, but we are eager to learn whether the promising research findings translate into an opportunity to expand our donor base.

## **5. Donor and Patient Experience**

On 1 June 2023, the organ donation law in Northern Ireland changed, joining fellow home nations and Crown Dependencies in having an Opt-Out system for deceased organ and tissue donation. Whilst numbers are small there has been a promising start to the change, with a deemed consent rate of 67% and just 1% of the Northern Ireland population opting out on the Organ Donor Register.

Contributing to our work to reduce health inequalities Gail Mifflin and David Rose gave oral evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on ethnicity in transplantation and transfusion to support the work of these MPs (Sarah Olney, Jackie Doyle-Price and Mark Tami).

National Blood Week launched just after May's Board. As we set out in the last update the campaign centred around the celebration of the 'giving type' and was supported across all our channels, by many influencers and by partner organisations. Initial results show that we registered nearly 700 people of Black Heritage to donate blood in the first week, with more than 10,000 total blood registrations and 500 people registered to donate plasma for medicine. Collection appointments have been synchronised with an increase on the current new donor cap and this has resulted in an encouraging uplift in new donors donating.

Campaigning continues until the end of August with further highlights including Capital Xtra DJ Shayna Marie hosting her birthday celebration at a donor centre with a group of celebrity influencers. We are also investing in more call centre agents for a month to help convert enrolees and increase low fill rate centres. A full evaluation will be completed at the end of the campaign period

Two recent evaluations for our first Plasma Donation Week (PDW) in April, and the Organ donation campaign pilot in the NW of England for Q4 FY23. Plasma registrations were doubled and appointments increased to above target. Our Organ campaign increased awareness and intention to register among key audiences but did not meet expected registration targets. Further research will be informing how we learn from this and apply to this year's Organ Donation Week.

As part of our plans to improve the on-session donation experience, we've been co-creating how donor centres should be designed with donors, patient groups and our people. Our new Plasma centre in Reading is the first venue to showcase a new look and feel throughout. We have created a modern, welcoming, and even more appealing experience. This approach will also be applied to the Plasma centre in Birmingham in the coming months.

For the new Brixton donor centre there is opportunity to adapt the design further to help grow and diversify the donor base with more donors of Black Heritage. We are commissioning dedicated engagement with local community and patient groups to ensure the new centre is reflective and welcoming to the community when it opens next year.

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