

UK Government update for NHSBT Public Board, 6 June 2024

General Election preparation

With a general election called for 4 July, DHSC (along with other Government Departments) has moved into a pre-election period, or Purdah. This means that whilst much of the essential work of Government and its agencies can, and must continue, there are some things that need to pause, stop or be done differently. Similarly, there is specific, new work that needs to happen in preparation for a new Government.

During the pre-election period, [guidance](#) sets general principles that the Civil Service is following:

- We must not undertake any activity that could call into question our political impartiality or that could be seen as using public resources for party political purposes.
- Departmental **and Public Body** (*including NHSBT*) activity should not be seen to compete with the election campaign for public attention.

It is also a requirement of the Ministerial Code that Ministers must not use government resources for party political purposes and must uphold the political impartiality of the Civil Service.

Announcements and decisions that a new Government could reasonably be expected to take a view on cannot happen until after the election. Publications that are not critical ahead of the election should also be paused. We know that for NHSBT, this includes publication of its 2024/25 Business Plan and its 2023/24 Annual Accounts and Report (the latter also need to be laid in Parliament once it is sitting). However, we are working with NHSBT to secure exemptions for essential media campaigns and advertising to continue, so that blood and organ donation activity can be maintained. Routine factual press notices may continue to be issued – for example statistics that are issued on a regular basis – this includes updates on blood stocks and organ donation and transplantation data published online.

Internally, Permanent Secretaries have been able to meet with Leaders of opposition parties since the start of 2024 to provide factual information about departmental organisation and to inform civil servants of any organisational or policy changes likely in the event of a change of Government. These meetings are confidential.

Civil Servants are producing early briefing materials for new or returning Ministers, and identifying urgent or live issues to be flagged or that could occur during the immediate period after an election. We will be analysing manifesto commitments related to health once these are published.

Spending Review

Prior to the election announcement, we have been working with NHSBT to put together a strong case to be considered at the next Spending Review for investment that will help to modernize and strengthen the blood and organ donation programmes. We will continue to prepare and adapt as we understand more about priorities of a new government and how timings may be affected.

Substances of Human Origin

The EU Parliament has voted on the new Substances of Human Origin (SoHO) Regulations - these new standards will apply in Northern Ireland (NI). They will come into force 2 months after the text is published in the EU Journal (expected imminently). These quality and safety standards include (but are not limited to) blood, tissues and cells. Member states (and NI) will need to have arrangements in place to follow these by 2027. We are working closely with NHSBT, regulators and the Department of Health in NI to assess any divergence from domestic legislation and potential impact for NI, in line with the Windsor Framework, to make sure these critical products can continue to move smoothly between GB and NI as needed.