



NHSBT Public Board Meeting

30 July 2024

Chief Executive's Report

Status: Official

This report sets out the remarkable work led by the NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) teams, using innovation and expertise to deliver improvements across our services and support the work of the wider NHS in overcoming difficulties.

We have been supporting the NHS to respond to the recent cyber attacks through providing pathology and testing services. The cyber attack means that those hospitals affected are having to use more O neg blood than usual. In addition, the variable weather causes people with sickle cell disease to be more at risk of serious complications, leading to hospitals requiring more O neg blood. These issues, combined with other factors such as the holiday period, mean that our stocks are under pressure. Our teams are working hard to increase the number of sessions and undertake targeted marketing, to bring in more donors. I am working closely with my Executive Team to ensure that we are doing everything possible and continue to meet demand for blood.

One of my key priorities for organisation is delivery, with a focus on improving our services so that we can save or improve more lives. I am pleased that the performance report for the first quarter of the financial year demonstrates improvements across a range of measures. Work led by NHS Blood and Transplant to improve organ utilisation has led to an increase in the number and quality of organs transplanted. The supply of serum eyedrops and ocular tissue is 5% higher than anticipated.

There has also been improvement in supporting our teams. Colleague turnover continues to decrease and is currently at 12.4% (an improvement against the 14% target). In addition, any vacancies are being filled quickly, with the 'time to offer' being under the 11-week target on average.

These improvements – and the others noted in the Board Performance Report – could not have been achieved without the enthusiasm and dedication of our teams. I continue to visit teams across the country and am always struck by the common goal of delivering the highest levels of care for those who rely on our services.

1. People

Dr Lise Estcourt has been appointed as the new Medical Director for Transfusion. Lise has worked at NHSBT for 9 years as a consultant in haematology and transfusion medicine in Oxford and as associate professor at the University of Oxford. She will be working closely with the blood supply and clinical services directorates.

People Plan

A roadmap is being developed for the 3-year objectives set out under Join, Stay and Thrive. Key Performance Indicators have been agreed and progress will be reported on a quarterly basis to the Executive Team, with Board-level assurance provided to the People Committee. Publication of both corporate and directorate-level plans is targeted for September.

Join

In June there was a large and unplanned spike in vacancies. Priority is being given to front line collection vacancies as a result. Inevitably there will be an impact on future time to offer KPI's, which is likely to be seen in July - September.

Stay

The Our Voice annual employee engagement survey result showed a small improvement of our overall engagement score to 7.2, with Black, Asian and ethnic minority colleague engagement increasing by 0.5 to 7.5. A review of the survey results at a corporate level has led to career growth being set as a priority area, together with a continued focus on both inclusion and further reducing bullying and harassment scores.

Thrive

We are testing career conversation and succession planning toolkits to support our leadership and management development work.

The Forward Together Programme is progressing with plans to deliver an Anti-Racism Framework for the organisation. Work will commence soon on review of Inclusive Recruitment and Learning and Development.

2. Finance

We are pleased to confirm the completion of our commissioning process for Blood and Specialist Services. This will allow us to confirm our funding envelope and corresponding expenditure budgets for 2024-25. We will be socialising new contracts and price lists to trusts and reverting to 2024/25 billing for the year.

Following the quarter one reforecast, we are confident that Plasma, Clinical and Tissue and Eye Services will deliver this year within their funding envelope. We are starting to see underlying pressures materialise as more activity is needed to maintain blood stocks and Organ Donation and Transplantation continues to support organ retrieval. This will be closely monitored in quarter two, with options for mitigation under active consideration.

3. Service Delivery

I am proud of the way our teams have supported the wider NHS in responding to the recent cyber attacks. Red Cell Immunohaematology (RCI) is continuing to support Southeast London hospitals, with locums joining the organisation to meet the increase in workload. The support we have provided has been positively received - particularly regarding clinical support from RCI Consultant Clinical Scientists. Therapeutic Apheresis Services (TAS) is also supporting the NHS response through provision of red cell exchange procedures for patients. This is enabling the hospitals' exchange programs to run at full capacity and clear the backlog created by the attack.

A contract to manufacture CAR-T therapies, to support clinical trials for cancer patients, has started at the Barnsley Advanced Cellular Therapy lab. This is the first time NHSBT will be providing a full CAR-T manufacturing service. It allows a faster turnaround time for patients, as products are manufactured locally rather than being shipped overseas.

The aim is to build the plasma donor base to 10,000 active plasma donors by the end quarter two. The frequency of donation has been maintained, in part thanks to the success of Plasma Perks. In early July the first of our donors achieved six donations since 1 May.

The Test and Learn in Twickenham for a mixed (plasma and whole blood) product centre went live on Monday 17th June, resulting in a 15% growth in the whole blood donor base from May 2023, and a 128% increase from June 2023. An increased plasma collection capacity at Twickenham also went live at the same time.

NHSBT successfully passed the Fleet Transport Association audit and was awarded accreditation for 12 months, demonstrating the high standards of the NHSBT fleet.

4. Innovation

To complement the 5 National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Blood and Transplant Research Units, NHSBT funds several Principal Investigators and researchers to undertake research into improving donor experiences and patient outcomes. This research was subject to a 5-year review in June, with external experts joining operational directors and lay contributors to review a briefing report, hear presentations, provide views on current and planned research work, and make recommendations. The review, organised by the Research Governance Office, ran smoothly over two days and the feedback received on NHSBT research was excellent. An outcome report is currently being compiled, with outcomes and recommendations to be reviewed by the Executive Team and shared in due course.

Blood Supply held an independent meeting at the International Society of Blood Transfusion forum in Barcelona to initiate a collaboration with global blood establishments on the validation of blood bags with a new plasticiser. This global collaboration will improve the quality and efficiency of the validation process, reducing costs and enable large scale change in a reduced timeframe.

The testing and development programme reached a significant milestone with installation of its first 3 bacterial screening testing machines in Manchester, Filton and

Colindale. A new testing laboratory has been established in Manchester to test for virus within plasma for medicines. This laboratory leverages expertise within blood supply to support the delivery of plasma for medicine targets.

The Marketing Automation Tool (MAT) project is approaching the final stages of implementation, with the important user acceptance testing stage now in progress. As well as addressing technology obsolescence and delivering efficiencies, crucially MAT will provide a modern platform for us to rapidly deliver personalised and more effective marketing communications to our donors. We are now looking at a potential opportunity to go-live with MAT earlier than originally planned.

The recent introduction of the LivingPath digital solution, to increase the levels of living organ donation, is starting to make a positive impact on the pathway, by reducing early declines of kidney offers within the UK Living Kidney Sharing Scheme. NHSBT are working closely with our Living Donation Centre colleagues to support the on-going embedding of this new solution across the whole system.

We continue with plans to improve the supply of corneas to hospitals within England. NHS England will fund a project to increase the number of Eye Retrieval Schemes. We are working jointly to better manage the patient waiting list, ensuring that the patients with the greatest need get the tissue they require for their condition.

5. Donor and Patient Experience

As part of our continuous drive to be inclusive and ensure our donors and patients receive the best care possible, we are now recording the sex-assigned-at-birth of donors, as well as their gender. We've worked closely with the Joint United Kingdom (UK) Blood Transfusion and Tissue Transplantation Services Professional Advisory Committee (JPAC) to update the donor selection guidelines. This helps us further improve clinical safety, enables us to welcome more trans people to donation and gives everyone the chance to declare both their gender and sex-assigned-at-birth.

Several NHSBT teams and initiatives have been nominated or won awards. The paediatric organ donation campaign, *Waiting to Live*, has won or been shortlisted for over 30 marketing and advertising awards. Teams in Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation have been shortlisted for two Nursing Times awards. The first is for TransplantPath, the new digital system that improves the quality of data available to transplant centres when considering an organ offer. The second nomination is 'Training for specialist nurses in deceased organ and tissue donation across the UK'.

National Blood Week this year aimed to educate the public about the ongoing need for donations, highlighting how anyone could need blood and that many people can give it. The campaign focused on the need for O negative, Black heritage and donors near to key donor centre locations. During the campaign there was a 30% increase in registrations from people of Black Heritage, c27,000 total registrations to (up 158% on NBW 23) and 316k users on the website and app. We saw a rise of 480% in donors registering interest in platelet donation, reaching a record 1,950 sign-ups. There was also a 47% increase in plasma registrations during the campaign.

The British Transplant Games will be taking place in Nottingham between the 1 – 4 August, bringing around 1,000 transplant athletes together, including children as

young as two, to compete in more than 25 sports, with many advancing to the World Transplant Games. There will also be over 1,700 supporters from hospitals across the UK, celebrating the gift of life for over 40 years. This is an inspirational event for members of NHSBT to attend and see the impact that our work makes on patients.

The coming months will bring more opportunities. We are working in close collaboration with the new Government to provide briefing to Ministers about our services and exploring how we can continue to build our services and support the Ministerial priorities, such as reducing wait times for elective surgery.

As my focus turns to the winter, I will continue to work with colleagues across NHSBT, Government and others to identify innovative approaches to build up our resilience, so that we can continue to meet demand.

Author: Dr Jo Farrar Chief Executive

Date: July 2024