



NHSBT Public Board Meeting
26 November 2024
Chief Executive's Report

Status: Official

The past month has presented some exciting opportunities for collaboration with our partners. We began by hosting Chief Executives and senior leaders from some of the world's largest blood services in Bristol for the Alliance of Blood Operators (ABO) Board meeting. This gathering highlighted the value of our international partnerships, which enable us to benchmark our performance, tackle shared challenges, and drive innovation across the sector.

Another key event was the NHS Blood and Transplant Stakeholder Forum, which brought together patient and donor representatives alongside third-sector colleagues. The discussions focused on areas of joint work, such as improving the donor base for blood, plasma, and tissues. Powerful presentations were delivered by the Donor Family Network, sharing their efforts to enhance support for the families of organ donors. We also heard from colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Care about the consultation on the NHS 10-year plan. I am looking forward to continuing these important conversations, particularly as we work with DHSC and NHS England to provide feedback on the new NHS 10-Year Plan and demonstrate NHSBT's role in its implementation. We have also shared the plan with staff, stakeholders, and the public via social media.

Finally, the annual NHS Blood and Transplant Nursing Conference took place this month, bringing together nurses from across the organisation to celebrate successes and discuss ongoing challenges. The energy and dedication of everyone involved were truly inspiring.

1. PEOPLE

In April, we launched our People Plan, outlining our organisational ambition for the next three years to enhance the experience of our people at NHSBT, both for current staff and those considering joining us. Six months into its delivery, we have already seen several new initiatives take shape, including the launch of a new careers site. We have also introduced a fresh approach to resolving workplace issues with the approval of our Resolution Policy, and we are preparing to roll out our Anti-Racism Framework.

Employee engagement continues to be a top priority. Following the most recent staff survey, we have been actively developing and implementing action plans. In September, we hosted our first NHSBT Annual Conference, bringing together 230 colleagues from across the organisation to explore ways to improve the working experience at NHSBT, both now and over the next decade. It was inspiring to hear

from our people, with clear themes emerging around greater understanding of the diverse roles and skills across the organisation, clearer pathways for career progression, and the value of meaningful performance conversations with managers. We are committed to turning these valuable insights into actionable improvements.

At the start of the year, we set a goal to improve our people data to ensure managers have access to timely and accurate information. We have been developing and testing new reports, and we expect to launch a new product before the end of the financial year. This tool will provide managers with the insights and intelligence they need to better understand and support the people in their teams.

2. FINANCE

The national commissioning process for Blood and Specialist Services for 2024-25 has been finalised. The final outcome letter, along with the updated price lists and contracts, has been shared with hospitals and stakeholders, and billing at the new prices began in October.

Following the Quarter Two forecast, there continues to be pressures in Blood Supply and Marketing to support blood stock resilience. However, these pressures have been mitigated by several actions, and we are confident that the financial position will be restored by the end of the year.

Work is now progressing on shaping the funding envelope for the coming year. All divisions are in the process of developing budgets that align with their respective plans and strategies. A forward-looking update was presented to the National Commissioning Group in mid-November, setting expectations and providing an update on service and product delivery.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

Corneas

There has been progress with new Eye Retrieval Schemes to boost donation systems. The first two NHS Trusts have signed contracts to work with us, and a further seven are planned to go-live over the next five months. We are also working closely with the hospice community to increase donated corneas, and now have partnerships with 14 hospices with a further 17 in the pipeline. Together with further work to optimise our current donation routes, I am increasingly confident of delivering the step change needed for cornea availability.

Organ Donation and Transplantation

Improvements are being seen in opt-in registrations on the Organ Donor Register, which has met 100 per cent of its target for England and Wales and eight per cent higher in England and ten per cent higher in Wales than last year.

The Organ and Tissues Donation and Transplantation Clinical Team presented at the European Society for Organ Transplantation (ESOT) International Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) Congress and Conference. The United Kingdom is seen as a leader with regards to DCD donation, with our rates being equal to or exceeding Donation after Brain Death (DBD) rates. We are collaborating and sharing good

practice with international colleagues, to increase organ utilisation rates from DCD donors and maintain transplant numbers.

A National Organ Utilisation Conference 'Striving for Synergy' was held in September, bringing together patient representatives and clinical teams. The event included a discussion on the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) programme, which has published Transplant Specific ERAS guidelines for Kidney. There is considerable interest in development ERAS resources for other organ groups.

Whole Blood

Upweighted advertising activity continues to help boost bookings at donor centres with capacity. We will also be delivering three key pilots near donor centres: online advertising to decision makers to encourage organisations to become involved in the winter campaign; a bespoke mailing to targeted addresses; and a door-drop to urgently encourage people to book an appointment.

Since the Amber alert was declared in July, the additional capacity and activities deployed have driven three consecutive months of donor base growth, more than reversing six months of continuous decline. This has been particularly apparent for O negative, where the donor base has grown by two per cent in four months, and now exceeds the size last seen 12 months ago. New donor recruitment (year to date) stands 8,000 above the same point last year.

Plasma

Despite some challenges with direct recruitment and sustaining switching levels, Plasma for Medicine donor performance is strong: with a national donor base of over 10,000, forty per cent of which is in Reading. In Birmingham, we are above target for overall donation frequency, number of high-frequency donors and donor satisfaction. Additional activity (including a new film showing the ease of donation) is underway to encourage blood donors (from non-priority blood groups) in the radius of plasma donor centres to switch to plasma.

Plasma continues to support blood stocks with the additional whole blood capacity at the Twickenham centre. The active Twickenham blood donor base is now 3,694, which is an increase of more than 2,000 in the last six months. The programme remains on target for Immunoglobulin and Albumin to be returned to the UK in January 2025.

Clinical

A week-long educational programme was launched on Stem Cells Awareness Day in October, highlighting the ease of joining the register. A combination of this activity and a pre-donation email saw around 2,000 registrations – increasing from an average of 800.

The Therapeutic Apheresis Service (TAS) team completed support for Guys and St Thomas' Trust (GSST) in October following the London cyber-attack earlier in the year. Over the four months of support, TAS performed an additional 97 red cell exchange procedures for 76 GSST patients.

Service Strategy Launch

The Executive Team has approved the five-year service strategy, which focusses on three key areas aligned to NHSBT's corporate objectives: process and system modernisation; People and culture; Customer and stakeholder experience.

Inspections and Audit

NHSBT has received positive feedback from several regulatory inspections performed against regulations and/or standards in Quarter Three and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) inspected our Southampton, Basildon and Liverpool centres. Improvement action planning/ implementation has commenced with the respective business areas.

4. INNOVATION

In September, we implemented the Salesforce Marketing Cloud, which will transform our direct marketing, email and SMS communications. We have already been able to reformat our emails, automate the invitation process to donors and half the time needed to build and send email communications. We will continue to improve our approach as well as make use of the AI features offered by Salesforce.

The *Ex Vivo* lung perfusion project is underway at the Royal Papworth Hospital, with lungs from donors being placed on a machine to improve their quality prior to transplantation. It is anticipated that the use of this technology will increase lung utilisation.

5. DONOR AND PATIENT EXPERIENCE

The second tranche of our successful Community Grants Programme is now live. Fifty-one community groups and organisations across England and Wales have received a share of £600,000 funding as part of the Government's commitment to continue to tackle health inequalities and promote blood and organ donation among Black and Asian communities.

The Programme is dedicated to funding projects led by community, faith, or belief organisations to inspire greater awareness and support for donation. The South Asian Heritage Trust is one of the successful recipients and will use the funding to raise awareness about organ donation with South Asian communities. This includes addressing the taboos and misinformation that often surround organ donation by encouraging families to talk openly about donation and challenging deep-rooted cultural myths.

The British Bone Marrow Registry has been renamed as the NHS Stem Cell Donor Registry (SCDR) to better reflect current practices, and the recruitment criteria have been extended to include all males and females aged 17-40. There has been a significant increase in recruitment following these changes, and associated publicity, with on-session recruitment in October more than double that in previous months.

Organ Donation Week 2024

In late September, we marked Organ Donation Week, with a focus on 30 years since the launch of the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR). The low-cost campaign delivered

420 pieces of press coverage with 90 million opportunities to see/hear our message and over two million opportunities on social media. As well as significant social media activity, we secured excellent national and regional media coverage including a great piece on *BBC One's Breakfast* featuring donor and recipient stories and a live interview with Anthony Clarkson, Director of Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation. The activity drove an increase in awareness of organ donation amongst the public and a 90 per cent increase in registrations via the website, a 25 per cent increase in people visiting the ODR website and a 98 per cent increase in opt-ins to the register (around 650).

Blood Donation

In early November, we launched a new campaign tagged "Give the best gift this winter", to encourage people to donate blood over the festive period. The campaign has already received widespread national and local media coverage focused on the need to fill 100,000 vacant appointment slots in the run up to Christmas. There is also a significant amount of activity planned on social media, as well as digital advertising boards in donor centre areas.

Thanks to the hard work of our partnerships team, we launched 'Donate Breaks' in October, with 135 organisations announcing their commitment to give their employees time off to donate blood. Supporters included The Co-operative Bank, Millwall FC and Hargreaves Lansdown. The launch generated over 80 pieces of media coverage and syndication across regional news.

Stem Cell Awareness

The Stem Cell Awareness Day had a focus on how the criteria for possible donors has changed. This generated more than 60 pieces of coverage on TV, radio, online and in print. We saw a doubling of donor recruitment during October and a 161 per cent increase in views on the stem cell pages on blood.co.uk. We also used a great case study of a married couple who beat odds of 1 in 4,000,000 to both donate stem cells, which got excellent media coverage.

The coming months will bring more landmark events. The new Brixton Donor Centre is due to open on 16 December. On 21 December, the *BBC* will air a special 'blood transfusion' themed episode of their prime time show *Casualty*. We have been working with the *Casualty* team on this Christmas special since late spring with filming taking place at Filton and interviews with staff. We are working with the *BBC* communications team to maximise media coverage about the show and to use it to inspire people to donate.

Our plans are in place to ensure that we are prepared for winter pressures. We will continue to work with colleagues in NHS England, NHS Trusts, Government and others to continue to maintain blood stock levels and provide a stable service through the coming months to support the patients who rely on our vital services.

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