

NHSBT Public Board Meeting**01 April 2025****Chief Executive's Report****Status: Official**

Since our last Board meeting, we have had several positive developments. First, on 22 January, we celebrated the opening of our Brixton Donor Centre, which will make it easier for more people from the Black community to donate blood. Brixton is home to one of the highest concentrations of people of Black heritage in England and Wales, with Lambeth's population being 24%, compared to just 4% nationwide. Dame Elizabeth Anionwu, the UK's first sickle cell nurse counsellor, officially opened the centre, and we were joined by Baroness Merron (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Care), Debbie Weekes-Bernard (Deputy Mayor of London) and Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP (Labour Member of Parliament for Clapham and Brixton Hill). The Brixton centre is set to accommodate approximately 1,100 appointments per week, with six donation chairs running for eight hours a day, and there's potential to increase capacity in the future.

On 24 February, we held our staff awards in Manchester, honouring the hard work and dedication of our people. With 981 nominations across 12 award categories, we shared the exciting results across our internal channels. We were also pleased to have Professor Sir Stephen Powis, National Medical Director of NHS England, as a guest at the event.

On 6 March, I had the privilege of joining Baroness Merron and Professor Sir Stephen Powis to celebrate a UK milestone - the delivery of the first life-saving medicines made from plasma donated by blood and plasma donors in England. This significant achievement brings us closer to the NHS goal of becoming self-sufficient in producing these vital medicines domestically. The news attracted significant national, regional and local media coverage with a focus on encouraging more people to donate all blood products. An event to thank and recognise our partners is scheduled for early April.

1. People

This Board report marks the conclusion of the first year of delivering our 3-year People Plan, which outlines our priorities for improving the experience of people joining, staying, and thriving at NHSBT. A detailed review of the first year's progress will be presented at the next meeting of the People Committee.

The first phase of the Forward Together Programme is set to conclude in March 2025, with Julie Pinder taking over as Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) from Anthony Clarkson on 1 April. We will now begin Phase 2 of the programme. The vision for Phase 2 is to "continue to build an inclusive organisation where everyone belongs,

and it is easier to serve our colleagues, donors, and patients.”. Phase 2 will include initiatives that align with the People Plan ambitions.

Our efforts to support people in thriving within the organisation are ongoing. During the fourth quarter of the 2024-25 financial year, we delivered various Growth sessions across different locations. We explored options for career development and held a successful National Apprenticeship Week in February. As we enter the new financial year, growth and development will remain central areas of focus. We will continue working to support the development of our leaders and managers while creating new tools to improve capability.

In the final quarter of the financial year, the People Data Project began rolling out the new Manager Assistant report in phases. As of 11 March, 665 out of 1001 managers had access to the new report, providing them with more information than before. We expect the full rollout of Manager Assistant to be completed by the end of April.

The Set Up Pack Down project has successfully completed the rollout of mechanical handling devices to all Blood Donation mobile teams. The project was delivered on time and within budget. Feedback from teams has been extremely positive. This project is an excellent example of collaboration across multiple departments. The project will continue to monitor Health and Safety incidents over the next six months.

We are pleased to announce that Claire Claydon has joined DX as the new AD of Donor Experience Services. Claire joins us from the NEC Group, where she was the Marketing Director, focusing on arenas and ticketing. She brings a wealth of experience in customer service and marketing.

We also welcomed two new senior nurses to the organisation: Maggie Pacheco, Chief Nurse for Transformation and Programmes, who started in February, and Ellen Bull, Chief Nurse for Workforce, Strategy, and Professional Standards, who started in March. Both are on 12-month fixed-term contracts.

The Skills Share pilot, which allows colleagues to undertake two-week work experiences in different areas of the directorate, has launched. This initiative aims to break down barriers, improve ways of working, and enhance individual skills.

The Biannual International Conference of NHSBT and BTS was held in Brighton, where Olive McGowan, Chief Nurse OTDT, won the Excellence in Delivering Patient Care award, and the Patient Safety Team - OTDT received a ‘Highly Commended’ in the Unsung Hero category. Congratulations to both Olive and the Patient Safety Team – OTDT.

Finally, on 1 May, a joint conference between DX and Comms & Engagement will take place, with an emphasis on building and diversifying our donor base.

2. Finance

Approaching financial year end, DX forecasts an out-turn of £24.9 million, a £3.1 million (14%) adverse variance against budget. This comprises three main areas: media campaigns (£1.6m) in response to the Amber alert, for which there was

ministerial approval; National Contact Centre (£1m) also in response to Amber alert activity; and partnerships work (£0.5m) to increase appointments and grow donor base. These overruns are non-recurring; however, a central contingency of c£1.5m has been set-aside in next year's budget, in the event of needing further resilience and higher contact centre usage.

Our latest forecast reports a favourable outturn against our plan overall, including improvements against our funding envelope across all divisions, with the exception of continued pressures within Blood Supply and Marketing to support blood stock resilience. In overall terms the latest financial position for the year is forecasting a favourable outturn for the year.

I am pleased to confirm that the Blood and Specialist Services pricing proposal of a 2% uplift for NHSBT has been accepted through the national commissioning group held in mid-March. These income plans, alongside confirmed programme funding from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have been included in our latest budget proposals for next year. The final proposed budget will be presented alongside the business and investment portfolio plans for approval at the March 2025 Board meeting.

The directorate is committed to delivering the organisational CIP and each budget holder has responsibility for identifying their programmes. This is a challenge for some cost centres which are predominantly pay. Therefore, operating models need to be reviewed for sustainable delivery against establishment.

3. Service Delivery

On 6 March, following three years, we achieved a milestone for NHSBT and a great achievement for the NHS. Jill Jones, in Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital, was one of the first patients to receive plasma-derived medicines from the donations of blood and plasma donors across England. Jill lives with an immune deficiency and relies on immunoglobulin to fight infections.

For over a quarter of a century we have been importing 100% of these medicines for NHS patients, but this landmark moment means we can provide our own medicines, reducing reliance on imports, mainly from the USA. We start this journey on a firm footing achieving 25% self-sufficiency in immunoglobulins and 80% self-sufficiency in albumin.

Many people inside and outside of NHSBT, including our donors, have been involved in this programme, and we have an opportunity to them at an event being planned for 8 April.

Quality Assurance

External inspections: The Human Tissue Authority (HTA) and United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) inspected Filton and Newcastle centres, respectively. The activities observed included tissue retrieval, processing and diagnostic services. The outcome of these inspections was positive, with the organisation retaining its licenses and accreditations for practice. The expert, caring and quality values of the

organisation was mentioned for praise by the inspectorates in NHSBTs' staff technical and Quality Management System (QMS) capabilities.

Incident management improvement: Targeted interventions continue to make a positive impact in the timely closure of incidents. There were no reports in month of significant risk to donor and patient safety.

Blood Supply

In late January, using our new Marketing Information Tool, we sent emails to 1.1 million whole blood donors, outlining the current situation and challenges with blood stocks. The response was strong, with nearly 50% of donors opening the email, and about 15% clicking through. Approximately 1% of the emails resulted in a booked appointment. This outperformed the traditional approach, and we gained valuable insights for future communication with donors.

Organ Donation and Transplantation

In February, we launched the 7-week phase of *The Best Thing You'll Do Today* campaign, designed to encourage people to confirm their decision to become organ donors. In partnership with Bauer Media, well-known radio presenters are endorsing and promoting organ donation. This is supported by digital display ads, smart speaker opt-in registrations, and social media advertising on Facebook and Instagram, all aimed at making it quick and easy for people to confirm their decision.

From 10-16 March, we held our first Living Donation Week, coinciding with World Kidney Day. This initiative sought to raise awareness and inspire interest in becoming a living kidney donor through educational content and powerful personal stories.

Challenges in deceased organ donation continue, with a 4% reduction in the eligible donor pool and a 10% decrease in medically suitable potential donors this year. In response, we are establishing an Organ Donation & Transplantation (ODT) Joint Working Group in collaboration with the Department of Health & Social Care. The Group will focus on improving the donor pool and consent rates, gathering data, and holding discovery meetings with colleagues both in the UK and internationally, who face similar challenges. A major event in June will assess current practices and explore additional steps we can take. The insights from this work will inform the next phase of our ODT 2030 strategy, which is now approaching its mid-point since its launch in 2021.

4. Innovation

The first three months of digital booking functionality for platelet donors have been encouraging, with increased bookings and collections, and plenty of positive feedback from donors. We are now focused on promoting this to all donors.

We were pleased to open a further eye donation partnership at University Hospital of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust in March. This is the third collaboration implemented as part of the iOrbit project, which demonstrates progress towards building a pipeline of high-quality referrals for ocular donation. The two established new schemes are performing well, and both are above target for ocular donations in

Quarter 4 so far. On Friday 28th February, Rare Diseases Day, the government released the England Rare Diseases Action Plan. Our Genomics programme was included as a case study for improving care in individuals with rare conditions. You can read more here: [NHSBT Genomics Programme highlighted as case study for improving care in individuals with Rare Conditions.](#)

5. Donor and Patient Experience

Since opening in December, Brixton Donor Centre is already beginning to make an impact. To date, we have collected over 4,100 donations, 1,000 of which are from new donors. 10% of the total donations have been given by black heritage donors, compared to the national average of 3%. In addition, 59% of donors are under 35 years old, which over double the average we see at a national level.

6. Engagement

10 Year Health Plan Update

To support our ongoing efforts to be recognised in the new Government's 10-Year Health Plan, we held a stakeholder briefing about our submission, as approved by the Board in December. During the briefing, we asked stakeholders to help us engage with key decision-makers. Additionally, we have met with Amanda Pritchard, Former Chief Executive of NHS England, and the Department of Health and Social Care's 10-Year Health Plan team to emphasise the importance of NHSBT's role in the plan.

Engaging parliamentarians

We continue to engage with MPs and peers through various initiatives. These include a plasma roundtable hosted by Claire Hazelgrove MP (Labour, Filton) to inform parliamentarians about our plasma for medicines programme, as well as a stakeholder webinar. We also held a blood components drop-in at Parliament, attended by 22 MPs and staff from 10 additional MPs' offices, with Baroness Merron also in attendance. Additionally, several MPs have visited local centres, including those in Colindale, Speke, Manchester, and Plymouth Grove, among others.

Donate Breaks

The 'Donate Breaks' scheme encourages partner organisations to offer their employees time off during working hours to donate blood. This initiative supports our goal of maximising donor centre fill rates during weekday hours when capacity is available. Recent additions to the programme include PureGym, Sainsbury's, AJ Bell, and Siemens.

We are approaching the upcoming financial year with enthusiasm, dedicated to enhancing the quality of services we provide to both our donors and patients.

Author: Dr Jo Farrar Chief Executive
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