



## Blood and Transplant

NHSBT Public Board Meeting

**20 May 2025**

Chief Executive's Report

### **Status: Official**

The start of the new financial year has seen some exciting developments in partnership working to increase donation. The Ministry of Defence has set up donation events on their premises and we are exploring ways to support them in encouraging their staff to donate at our fixed and mobile sites. We have also welcomed several MPs and senior colleagues from NHS England to our centres, to discuss what more can be done to raise public support and awareness.

We are about to launch some exciting partnerships to further support donation. We have built on our successful partnership with Disney and their new Disney+ show, *IronHeart*, launching in June, will include messaging about blood donation, which has been co-produced with different communities.

We are also about to launch a new pilot with Boots, to increase awareness and personal engagement with blood donation. We will distribute 15,000 self-test blood type kits across four Boots retail locations. The goal is to evaluate the effectiveness in driving awareness, self-identification of blood type, and ultimately, future donor registration. This initiative represents an innovative approach to outreach through retail partnerships and aligns with our mission to diversify and expand the donor base. It also serves as a valuable model for potential future collaborations with national retailers.

### **1. People**

I am delighted that Professor Renata Gomes has joined NHSBT as Chief Scientific Officer (CSO). Renata brings a unique combination of science, political and leadership experience and previously spent five years as CSO at BRAVO VICTOR and has led research into the use of platelets and nanotechnology for regeneration.

We launched our new resolution policy in April (encompassing our previous Grievance and Dignity at Work policies) which brings a new approach to seek to resolve issues informally and at the earliest opportunity to support all colleagues in their working environment. We have rolled out training to over 800-line managers. We will formally review this in 12 months and will also be looking at how we can adopt continuous improvements across our wider portfolio to embed a more restorative culture across NHSBT, this will require further support for line managers and leaders.

We have launched a new approach to performance management, called Connected Conversations, adopting industry best practice in holding more regular holistic conversations with colleagues. This brings together Personal Development and Performance Reviews (PDPRs), career conversations, wellbeing conversations and regular one to ones, with a suite of supporting tools for managers. We anticipate that this will improve PDPR compliance and enhance colleague experience of performance and development conversations.

## **2. Finance**

The accounts for 2024/25 have now closed with an early draft of the Annual Report and Accounts provided to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and our external auditors Mazars, on behalf of the National Audit Office. We are timetabled to lay the statutory accounts before parliament no later than mid-July. Subject to the results remaining provisional, we can confirm that the 2024-25 position was delivered within our financial envelope.

As we move into 2025/26, our financial plan is fully funded to meet the agreed business plan priorities. A key aspect to the delivery of a sustainable financial plan will be the full achievement of our agreed cost improvement programme. This will be monitored very closely, with increased reporting and discussion in the monthly Executive Team performance meeting. We also continue to recognise the wider financial constraints across the system, and we have reviewed our policies and controls to ensure they are consistent with the recent update on spend controls from central Government.

We are grateful to the Department of Health & Social Care for responding positively to our funding requirement for 2025/26. The settlement included recurrent funding for key initiatives such as Abdominal Normothermic Regional Perfusion (ANRP) and DCD Hearts, as well as Clinical Leads for Utilisation, which will support an increase in the number and quality of organs for transplant. We are focused on how to efficiently incorporate these developments as we further transform our services and build on the recommendations from the Implementation Steering Group for Organ Utilisation (ISOU).

## **3. Service Delivery**

**Draft Annual Internal Audit Opinion:** GIAA have confirmed their intent to issue their Annual Opinion in the coming months and that they are “able to provide Moderate assurance on the governance, risk management, and control framework at NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) for the year ending 31 March 2025. This is an improvement on the ‘Limited’ opinion given in the last two years.” The Annual Opinion recognises ongoing, dedicated efforts to establish and embed a stronger internal control framework and to deliver improved arrangements in Risk Management, Governance, and Internal Controls so that they are more robust.

**HAV/B-19 testing:** In the year since the HAV/B-19 laboratory in Manchester opened, NHSBT has tested over 2 million plasma donations for Hepatitis A and parvovirus B19. This means that the backlog of launch stock and subsequent donations have been tested, and that NHSBT is now testing donations as they are collected. This is

crucial in supporting the production of plasma for medicines and makes the blood supply chain even safer.

**Therapeutic Apheresis Service:** We have started a new service providing red-cell exchange in Middlesbrough and an expanded service at the Whittington Hospital in London, increasing access for new patients and allowing existing patients to receive treatment closer to home.

**Organs Campaign:** The second phase of the "The Best Thing You'll Do Today" campaign ran for 7 weeks in February and March, via a partnership with Greatest Hits Radio, to motivate 50–69-year-olds to confirm their decision to be an organ donor. The campaign featured radio presenters endorsing organ donation, digital display advertising across Bauer media publications, and innovative smart speaker integration allowing instant registration through voice commands. For 2024/25 as a whole, over 735,000 people registered their decision to be an organ donor for the first time, achieving the target of 700k-750k new opt-in registrations.

**Blood Marketing Strategy:** Implementation of the new marketing and communications strategy started in April 2025. Key elements include expanding the audience to include existing donors to further support blood stock stabilisation and appointment booking and matching of donor interest levels with appointment availability and targeting resources on those areas where we have the greatest appointment capacity to fill.

**Grid management to reduce cancellation:** Following feedback from collection teams about the impact of new and returning donors on session flow at mobile sessions, we introduced functionality into Pulse to better manage the spacing of these attendances across sessions. Since the change in January, advanced cancellations have reduced from 3.4% to 2.8% of booked appointments, and total cancellations between Jan and April were 0.3 percentage points lower, at 8.7%, than the 2024/25-year average.

**IBI:** It is one year since the Infected Blood Inquiry publication and our commitment to implementation of those recommendations where we have a role in implementation remains strong. We have fully engaged with the IBI programme nationally and with each working group relevant to the organisation. Our main focus is on recommendation number 7 regarding blood transfusion which builds on the excellent work of transfusion 2024 and evolution into Transfusion Transformation due for publication in summer 2025.

**Organ Donation:** Provisional data show that there were 7% fewer deceased organ donors in 2024-25, compared with 2023-24. This is partly explained by a 18% decrease in the pool of potential donors since 2020. Increased organ utilisation means that the transplant rate only decreased by 3%. We are working with partners across the donation community to address this trend. We have established an Organ Donation Joint Working Group in partnership with DHSC to identify opportunities to grow donation numbers, supported by international peer perspectives.

**Digital, Data and Technology Service:** A number of critical milestones for our digital, data and technology modernisation and transformation agenda have been achieved

in the last period. At year end FY24/25, our system and service availability metrics for Critical National Infrastructure, Key Hospital Services and Key Public Services were 100% at overall level for the last 12 months. This outstanding performance is testament to the significant efforts to address technical debt and legacy, improve monitoring and continuously improve our services.

#### **4. Innovation**

A collaboration with Royal Papworth Hospital & Freeman Hospital, which was highly commended at the recent British Transplantation Society Congress, has performed the UK's first DCD Paediatric Heart Retrieval and Paediatric Heart Transplant using Hypothermic Organ Perfusion. This technology means more opportunities for small children waiting for heart transplants. There are currently 2 Ex Vivo Lung Perfusion (EVLV) programmes live in the UK. This has contributed to a 10.4% increase in lung transplantation year to date compared to previous year to date.

Activity to increase the supply of cornea tissue has continued, with the iOrbit project, in collaboration with NHS England, progressing the introduction of new Eye Retrieval Schemes (ERS). Since my last report the Mid & South Essex trust, has signed a contract and begun to work with NHSBT. I am pleased to report that patients are already benefiting from corneas donated at these sites.

NHSBT has been supporting machine perfusion for a number of years, to increase levels of organ utilisation, notably our DCD Heart and Abdominal Normothermic Regional Perfusion programmes. We have now secured some funding to mobilise a transformative programme to expand this success and set the path towards Assessment and Recovery Centres (ARCs). ARCs will be dedicated organ perfusion networks and facilities, utilising cutting-edge technology to prolong the viability of organs. The aim is that organs that are currently not suitable for transplant, will be able to be transplanted in the future, delivering a step change in the number of organ transplants across the UK.

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

Patients are now regularly receiving UK plasma derived medicines (PDMP) with NHSBT working in collaboration with DHSC, NHSE and Octapharma to continue to deliver a stable supply chain. The take up of UK derived Immunoglobulin and Albumin is progressing well and to schedule. The introduction of these medicines has been well received.

**High profile media:** In April, we arranged for *ITV1's This Morning* to interview double hand recipient Corinne Hutton and Deborah Gosling - sister of the donor, Julie Wild. The interview generated extensive national, regional and local coverage including the *Daily Mail* and *Jeremy Vine* on *BBC Radio 2*.

We also worked closely with Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and partners on their announcement of the first UK birth following a womb transplant. It was important to ensure the right messaging around the deceased programme (due to be announced

later in the year) which made clear that extra, special consents are needed for this type of donation.

**Brixton Donor Centre:** A review of the impact of our campaign relating to the opening of the Brixton Donor Centre, which featured local poster and billboard advertising, a three-week takeover of the Brixton tube station and location-targeted social media ads and community radio, demonstrates a 74% increase in registrations from people of Black heritage in London compared with the previous year. The centre achieved 1,678 new donor donations by March. The Brixton centre attracts a younger demographic with nearly 60% of its donors being under 35, compared to 40% across other London donor centres.

This report has outlined developments in growing and improving our services and we are looking forward to building on these as we move further into the new financial year.

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