



NHSBT Public Board Meeting

**22 July 2025**

Chief Executive's Report

**Status: Official**

I had the honour of becoming the Interim Chief Executive Officer for NHS Blood and Transplant of the 1 July 2025. I have spent my first few weeks meeting colleagues and learning more about the organisation and the incredible work that our teams do to save and improve thousands of lives every year.

I have also enjoyed meeting some of our donors and patients and hearing about how they have been impacted by NHSBT's services. I recently spoke to a lung transplant recipient, who talked about his incredibly moving experiences as a lung patient and his remarkable story of receiving a transplant on the same day he was placed on the waiting list. I also met donor families who spoke to me about the pride and comfort that the option of organ donation brought them after their tragic loss.

Speaking to our teams, patients and donors both humbling and inspiring. I am looking forward to working with colleagues in NHSBT and wider, to continue to grow our services, to improve patient experiences and outcomes.

**1. People**

At the end of June, we started the communications campaign to raise awareness of the work to deliver the first year of the People Plan, which will coincide with communications leading up to the next Our Voice survey, taking place in September.

We welcome two new Deputy Medical Directors have been appointed in Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation (OTDT). Professor John Casey is a Consultant Surgeon at the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh and Honorary Professor at the University of Edinburgh. He will support the OTDT Medical Director in providing clinical and professional input and leadership cross the donation, retrieval, and transplant pathway. Dr Rommel Ravanani is a Consultant Nephrologist at North Bristol NHS Trust and will facilitate R&D initiatives in OTDT and the realisation of some of our aspirations for innovation.

Abi Roberts, one of our Specialist Nurses - Organ Donation was awarded Registered Nurse of the Year by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board – a great achievement demonstrating the high regard in which Abi's role is held. Congratulations and well done Abi.

We continue to evolve and improve the Manager Assistant as part of our work to put more data in the hands of our managers and have now launched a new People

Summary Report and a new report detailing the diversity of our directorates, replacing the D&I dashboard.

The Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) annual report has been approved by the Executive Team and will be reviewed by the People Committee in August. Good progress has been made and increases in harm target are understood to be due to an increase in minor accidents, as colleagues adapted to the new mechanical tugs for moving supplies and equipment. Incident rates have since declined, and we are on track to meet the reduced 2025/26 target for Blood Supply. Near miss reporting has been adopted as a new board level indicator but we are not seeing the levels needed to meet target and have raised this in May's HSW scorecard to the directorates.

## **2. Service Delivery**

### Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation

NHSBT and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) held a 5-day International Donation Action Forum in June, to inform the work of the Organ Donation Joint Working Group. This provided an opportunity to share best practice sharing with colleagues from Australia, Canada, USA, Spain and the Netherlands and identify opportunities for improvement in the UK. We have placed the donor family and clinical voices at the heart of the work, with 700 responses submitted to online surveys seeking views on areas for improvement. Donor family, staff and clinical focus groups/discovery meetings were also held. The outputs will be collated into a report with recommendations, expected to publish later this year.

Machine Perfusion is transforming the transplantation of precious donated organs, and another step change is now starting. The business case for Assessment and Recovery Centres (ARCs) has been approved, which will pilot our vision for this service across Lung, Liver and Kidney and lead to more transplants within the next 18 months. The first steps will be modest as we test and learn what works, but our aim is to embed perfusion techniques into the UK's organ transplantation pathways.

To improve both the speed and quality of training for the Tissue and Eye Services Retrieval Teams, we have developed a new Eye Retrieval Blended Learning Package, using virtual reality. The package aims to cut the training period in half and is a credit to joint working across different departments within NHSBT.

### Blood

The new Southampton Donor Centre opened its doors to the public on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June, restoring whole blood collections to this area. The centre has proven popular with donors, with just under 1,000 donations collected in the first 5 weeks of opening.

### Plasma

NHSBT is recovering/collecting plasma to target and delivering that plasma for fractionation, allowing the NHS to manage its growing requirements for these lifesaving medicines. NHSBT have been working in collaboration with DHSC, NHSE and Octapharma to provide a stable supply chain for and have achieved an initial target set of 20% self-sufficiency in Immunoglobulin/80% Albumin.

### Infected Blood Inquiry

NHSBT's work to implement the Infected Blood Inquiry recommendations continue, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Care and other organisations. Our work on the Transfusion Transformation Strategy has been substantively acknowledged, and we remain closely involved in shaping the national approach to safe and equitable transfusion practice. NHSBT is also supporting the development of a permanent patient memorial, co-designed with affected communities.

### Patient Safety Incident Response Framework

A process review has taken place and the next stage of transition to the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) has been proposed. The transition plan and policies are to be amended to reflect this. The quality directorate's incident review (due Jan 2026) is anticipated to support the PSIRF transition. Three Patient Safety Investigation Incidents (PSII) have been completed and approved. A further three are in progress to closure

### Quality Assurance

NHSBT's Advanced Therapy Unit (ATU) at Birmingham was inspected by the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in May 2025, where 4 major non-conformances were raised. The non-conformances were related to a new treatment that the facility is planning to manufacture. Appropriate improvement responses have been submitted to the MHRA, and work is ongoing to deliver on these improvements prior to issuing any treatments therefore there is no patient impact. The Quality Management System (QMS) was deemed effective and provided assurance of a safe organisation.

United Kingdom Conformity Assessment (UKCA): NHSBT reagents manufactured in Liverpool (Red Cell Immunohaematology) have been awarded the UKCA mark by our UK approved body – Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Quality Assurance has supported RCI reagent department in appointing a new EU Notified Body (British Standards Institute - BSI) and have lodged a formal application for conformity assessment and CE certification under the new regulations.

### Risk & Resilience

Exercise Pegasus is a nationwide business continuity exercise about pandemic disease. It has been commissioned by the Cabinet Office, will be chaired at a ministerial level and includes several Government organisations. NHSBT are involved in developing the scenario to ensure it is realistic and our preparation ahead of the exercise is underway. NHSBT will then be participating in the exercise, which will be held over three days to reflect three stages of a pandemic: emergence; containment; mitigation.

## **3. Innovation**

### Clinical

Two new services have started in Cell, Apheresis and Gene Therapies (CAGT) helping deliver innovative cell and gene therapies to patients and improving patient access and outcomes. Firstly, several Therapeutic Apheresis Service (TAS) units and all the stem cells labs are supporting delivery of a new NICE recommended CAR-T therapy, lisocel, for lymphoma patients. Secondly, the Manchester TAS unit and Birmingham stem cell lab are supporting delivery of Casgevy gene therapy for sickle cell patients.

The first Descemet Membrane Endothelial Keratoplasty (DMEK) cornea graft has been issued by our Tissue & Eye Services team. This replaces damaged outer corneal tissue with healthy donor tissue, leading to faster visual recovery and reduced risk of rejection. By preparing the pre-peeled DMEK cornea in the eye bank, we can save surgeons time, reduce costs and ultimately help more people be treated.

[The results of the ACCESS study](#) of post-transplant cyclophosphamide-based (PTCy) prophylaxis after mismatched unrelated donor transplant (MMUD) have been published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. PTCy has the potential to significantly improve access to unrelated donor transplant for patients from minority ethnic backgrounds by enabling MMUD. Of 145 patients enrolled, all of whom received a MMUD matched at 7/8 or fewer HLA alleles, 1-year overall survival was around 80% with 59% of all patients enrolled from a minority ethnic background. It was noted that the use of MMUDs expands donor availability to all patients regardless of ancestry. Given the importance to UK transplant practice a special meeting of the UK Stem Cell Strategic Forum will be convened in early October to develop a consensus on the adoption of PTCy in the UK.

### Digital

I am delighted that the new OTDT TransplantPath web app won the "Best Technology Partnership of the Year" category at the recent HSJ awards. This streamlines critical parts of the organ donation pathway by providing information and images to transplant centres allow them to more effectively assess organ offers prior to transplant. The award is a tribute to our internal team and supplier, Apadmi.

We have created an AI eligibility chatbot that is designed to assist existing and potential blood donors with eligibility questions, focusing on travel and health. This will mean more donors can check their own eligibility, via the website, before their appointment. This should help increase the number of donors that turn up ready to donate and reduce deferrals on-session, aiding session flow. This is in final stages of testing and is due to be piloted in August.

A new service is in-development for priority group donors, enabling them to request their preferred appointment slot, online. This will mimic the successful NCC Priority Line service and will enable our priority group donors, who book online, to access the entire grid and to be prioritised for their preferred appointment time.

Since May, and following a pilot completed in 2024, staff working in hospital transfusion laboratories can access *RCI Assist*, an online referral support tool. The tool guides users when processing samples for patients requiring red cell transfusion. It contains decision points to either refer cases to Red Cell Immunohaematology (RCI) or resolve in-house and is supported with pop up information to improve hospital staff confidence. It is expected to avoid duplication of testing in RCI, reduce the time it takes to inform patient transfusion support, and reduce transport costs. In addition, since 2nd June, RCI laboratories no longer send hardcopy paper reports. RCI reports are available to customers through *Sp-ICE* which is a secure online platform giving hospitals fast access to reports. This is part of our commitment to improving efficiency, minimising risks associated with printing and posting paper reports and reducing our carbon footprint.

Tendable (formerly Perfect Ward) has been in use in Therapeutic Apheresis Services (TAS) since 2021 and contributes to embedding quality improvement in our frontline services. It has been approved for expansion across NHSBT. The contract was signed in June 2025 and implementation is underway. The key benefits of this will include improved visibility of local audit findings, automation of routine audits (e.g. infection control) and timely escalation of risks.

#### **4. Donor and Patient Experience and Engagement Activity**

##### Organ Donation and Transplantation

OTDT are currently recruiting Patient Representatives to each of our Solid Organ Advisory Groups. This is a positive step forward in involving patient and public voice partners (PPVs) – ‘people who are willing to share their perspective and experience with us to inform health services in a range of different ways’. Information on the role can be found [here](#).

We are trialling a new consent form to simplify the organ donation discussion while ensuring that families are provided the information they need. The new form has been developed with donor family input and will reduce the number of pages from five to two.

##### Dedicated Black Heritage Group Bookings

From September we will be launching Black heritage group donation sessions, designed to support recruitment and retention of priority group donors. This initiative enables donors to donate alongside family or community members, (which is a result of direct feedback), creating a supportive and culturally meaningful experience. These sessions will accommodate 20–50 donors per group and are open to both new and returning donors. Bookings can be made through digital channels and be supported and activated via existing partner and community engagement networks. Initial locations include Brixton, London West End, Shepherd's Bush, Birmingham, and Manchester Norfolk House, which has good volumes of black heritage donors. The aim of this initiative is to drive more donations from Ro donors to support patients, and to improve the diversity of the active donor base.

##### National Blood Week

We celebrated National Blood Week between 9th and 15th June - always a key moment in the year to honour the incredible generosity of our donors, staff and partners. The campaign urged people to be ‘one in a million’ and become a regular blood donor. During the week, an incredible 100,000 appointments to give blood were booked, exceeding the response to the 2024 Amber alert appeal, and nearly 29,000 new people signed up to become a blood donor.

Activity online and on-session thanking current and past donors was complemented by a media appeal calling for 200,000 new donors to help address current stock challenges. This gained blanket coverage across national, regional and local media. Highlights included *BBC Radio 4's Today* programme, *BBC1's Breakfast*, *Radio 4's World Tonight*, *ITV1's Good Morning Britain* live reporting outside the West End Donor Centre (WEDC) and two front page stories on the *Daily Mirror* and *Metro*. Further coverage that week included the launch of our innovative partnership with Port Royal Patties which featured on London broadcast media. Over the week, we saw 29,000 new registrations (more than half have now booked an appointment) and 100,000

bookings. We thank colleagues from across the organisation who supported the week, as well as our partners.

### Disney Lionheart

In late June, we launched our latest partnership with Disney/Marvel with a collaboration on their new Disney+ miniseries *Ironheart*. The partnership includes working with two of our community partners to create powerful films to be shared across social media; celebrities from *Ironheart* recording a film encouraging people to give blood; promotion via *Kiss FM* channels; and a 'red-carpet' screening event for community and other partners. The partnership with Disney on *Ironheart* is focused on recruiting more donors from Black communities, recognising that 46% of Black heritage people identify as Marvel fans and that it is the most popular entertainment franchise tracked amongst this group.

### Donor Experience

The migration of direct marketing activity to the marketing automation platform is continuing well. The new platform has delivered more than twelve million emails across 54 unique pieces of work and is being used to develop and deliver all new communications to donors. Work is ongoing on the build of the newly designed appointment reminder process. A pilot will commence in July, ahead of a roll-out in August. Work is beginning to design the new donor lifecycle and session fill processes, and design work will take place throughout Quarter 2.

Blood donor experience has started well, this year, with a score of 83.4% across April and May. Satisfaction with waiting time at session has seen the biggest uplift year-on-year (top box +2.8%) although quieter sessions in the spring, with lower fill rates and shorter check-in to screening times is likely to be contributing to this. For the third month in a row, May saw a decline in complaints related to appointment cancellations, which could be indicative of a positive impact following the introduction of phased grid builds based on staffing availability.

### 7/7 bombings memorial events

On 7 July, colleagues from across NHS Blood and Transplant joined partners in the police, fire, ambulance and wider NHS to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 7/7 London bombings. This included laying a wreath at the wreath-laying ceremony at the 7/7 memorial in Hyde Park followed by a moving service at St Paul's Cathedral. As well as remembering those who died and were injured, it was an opportunity to remind the public about the vital role we play during major incidents on this nature and, in turn, encourage more people to donate blood and tissues.

### VIP visits

We had several VIP visits in June including Baroness Merron, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Social Care, who visited the WEDC during National Blood Week and spent time speaking with donors and our staff. Matt Rodda MP (Reading) visited the Reading Plasma Donor Centre and met with donors and staff – he was keen to express his support for our move to our permanent donor centre in early 2026. Liz Jarvis MP (Eastleigh) visited the new Southampton Donor Centre on 26 June.

### NHS ConfedExpo

NHS ConfedExpo is the UK's leading health and care conference, and we were pleased to host a popular stand to showcase our life-saving work with the circa 7,000 delegates. Over the two days, we were able to showcase our work, including visits by Wes Streeting MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Dr Penny Dash, Chair, NHS England and Lord Victor Adebawale CBE, Chair, NHS Confederation. We also ran 'What's Your Blood Type' sessions with delegates finding out their blood type and booking appointments.

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