

NHSBT Public Board Meeting

30 September 2025

Chief Executive's Report

Status: Official

We officially exited amber alert status for O-negative blood stocks on 21 July 2025, following the implementation of an incident response in late May. This targeted intervention has had a demonstrable impact, with overall blood stock levels increasing by 3.3 days, including a 1-day rise in O-negative, 5.2 days in O-positive, and 1.4 days in B-negative. Notably, this is the first year we have recorded an increase in stock levels between the end of May and the end of August, marking a significant achievement in our operational resilience and supply management.

This report provides a summary of key developments and updates from across the organisation, highlighting progress, priorities, and areas of continued focus.

1. Service Delivery

Donor Centres: Performance at donor centres has been challenging over the summer, with the holiday season having the usual impact on bookings and fill, and hot weather further impacted attendance and Hb deferrals. Brixton donor centre continues to develop through its first year. With an active donor base now exceeding 9,300, Brixton attracts the largest proportion of new donors of any donor centre, and ranks second, behind Stratford, for donations by donors of Black heritage. The relocated Southampton donor centre opened in June and provides a much-improved environment for both donors and colleagues. In the 3 months since opening, Southampton's donor base has grown by 30%.

Brighton Donor Centre opens its doors for donors on 22 September. At the time of writing, appointment bookings for the centre are looking strong with over 700 donors booked into the first week and 75% of appointment bookings for the first 5 weeks being made by new or lapsed donors. Preparations are underway for the official opening launch on 16th October.

Donor Satisfaction: Busy sessions, following the successful National Blood Week campaign, led to a slight decline in donor satisfaction, especially for waiting times. However, performance has quickly started to recover, and top box satisfaction for overall experience for July was 82.3%, one percentage point above June's level. Net Promoter Score (NPS) fell by 2.6 points to its lowest level since August 2024 (immediately following Amber) – this was driven by larger than normal numbers of new and reactivated donors, who typically score lower for NPS than regular donors. From August we are switching to the new daily satisfaction survey process, with reporting backdated to April. The new methodology will cause scores to rise slightly, and this will be reflected from the next Board update.

Plasma for Medicines: Since August 2024, NHSBT has delivered a total of 563,000 litres of plasma to NHSE to be fractionated into plasma derived medicines (Immunoglobulin and Albumin) and supplied to patients. From April 2025 to March 2026, we will ship 450,000 litres (241,000 to date). Plasma is recovered from all whole blood donations, and any that is not used for clinical purposes is sent for fractionation. We also collect plasma directly from donors in our 3 source plasma clinics. Over 138,000 litres of plasma have been collected in 25/26 so far from both Source and Recovered.

Increasing the self-sufficiency of the UK in plasma derived medicines is a key goal as demand continues to rise globally. In the short term, NHSBT is scoping potential expansion locations for increased source plasma collection and is working with DHSC/NHSE to inform the long-term strategy in the delivery of plasma derived medicines

Ensuring that collection of plasma is efficient and productive is a key focus and this has been delivered in 25/26 through the delivery of our transformation agenda. Highlights include

- Moving from freezing sample tubes (used to test for HAV/B19) to ambient testing.
- Moving from validating plasma at our third-party frozen storage facility to integrating validation at our manufacturing sites.
- Reducing storage of plasma for long periods of time, will reduce risk, improve quality and deliver financial benefits.

The Therapeutic Apheresis Services red cell exchange service has extended its coverage to the East of England, with the treatment of the first two sickle cell disease patients in Luton. This new service offers red cell exchange for patients who previously did not have access to treatment or had to travel long distances.

Organ Donation: First-time opt-in registrations have increased month-on-month from April to July across the UK and stand at 98% of the opt-in target year to date. Organ Donation Week runs between 22nd and 28th September, emphasising the need for people to register their decision to be an organ donor. The campaign includes paid media advertising, national and regional media activity, support from partner and stakeholder organisations to amplify the campaign, and community engagement carried out by Organ Donation Ambassadors, Specialist Nurses for Organ Donation and Organ Donation Committees.

The Tissue and Eye Services team have again worked with international partners to import surplus corneas, helping meet more UK demand. Working with UK regulators (HTA) and the Venice Eye Bank, corneas were successfully imported from Italy into the UK this summer. Efficiency improvements have been made to deliveries of Serum Eyedrops. Each vehicle now delivers up to 8 patients: reducing costs and Co2 emissions.

Data, Digital and Technology Services: A number of critical milestones for our digital, data and technology modernisation and transformation agenda have been achieved in the last period. They include:

- System and service availability metrics for our critical systems, Key Hospital Services (KHS), and Key Public Systems (KPS) for July remained at 100%.
- The Infrastructure Modernisation Programme, a six-year initiative to modernise our infrastructure, has successfully concluded. The programme delivered a more resilient

and modern infrastructure, significantly reducing the risk of outages and enabling the continuous, 24/7 delivery of our critical services.

- We have successfully delivered the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR) integration with the NHS Wales App, which provides Welsh citizens with a real-time, transparent, and secure way to record, view, and update their organ donation decision.
- Technology Services will be automatically rolling out Windows 11 over the coming weeks. This upgrade will help ensure NHSBT remains aligned with current technologies, security standards, and ongoing support.
- Our efforts to enhance cyber security continued, with 5 major sites now benefiting from additional monitoring of medical devices.
- OTDT Product Centre as part of Matching and Offering Programme delivered its first key benefit—a change to the criteria for splitting livers, which will increase the number of livers available for paediatric patients across the UK who require a lifesaving transplant.
- After discussions with the Board and Executive Team regarding digital transformation plans for the next five years and support for the ten-year health plan, further assessment and design activities are scheduled. The focus will be on transitioning from analogue to digital systems, improving productivity through modernisation, and supporting the growth of services aimed at enhancing patient outcomes and reducing health inequalities. Key areas have been identified in data, AI, interoperability, and automation, underpinned by a technology platform and people capability roadmap. A follow-up meeting with the Board is planned for FY26/27.

External inspections: NHSBT's International Blood Group Reference Laboratory (IBGRL) completed a successful United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) inspection this month under the medical laboratories ISO15189:2022 standard. The inspectors highlighted 3 QMS and 1 technical non-conformance, with a couple of recommendations. Both the technical and QMS inspectors highlighted the professionalism of our staff and the high quality and safety they observed in our practices. Appropriate improvement responses are being developed in response to the non-conformances.

Infection control: The subject matter expert from St Georges and Epsom and St Helier Hospitals (GESH) who has been commissioned to support our work in Infection Control has completed an assessment against the NHS IPC Board Assurance Framework. Recommendations have been added to the 25/26 workplan including remodelling of the Infection and Prevention Control Committee to include water and ventilation representatives.

Safer Staffing: There is a pilot taking place in Quarter 3 to map the current staffing management against the National Quality Board (NQB) and NHSE Guidance for safer staffing.

Process improvements: We continue to make iterative changes to the incident management process and are seeing positive outcomes as a result. Going digital first for incident reporting has made this activity more efficient across the organisation, particularly for our Blood Donation teams. Since the implementation of the online tool, we've observed a 62% reduction in the use of paper-based forms within just one month.

Over the past 12 months, we've seen a significant reduction in the average age of overdue major incidents awaiting closure - down to 13 days from over 60 at this time last year. This improvement is largely due to focused efforts by the Quality Assurance team and stronger engagement from directorates. Meanwhile, the broader process improvement initiative remains ongoing.

Emergency Preparedness and Business Continuity: Exercise Pegasus is a cross-government Tier 1 business continuity exercise about pandemic disease. It has been commissioned by the Cabinet Office and will be chaired at a ministerial level. It will involve a wide number of different organisations across government. NHSBT will be feeding into DHSC and will be a key exercise player, other NHSBT colleagues are involved in developing the scenario to ensure it is realistic. The exercise will be held over three days to reflect three stages of a pandemic:

- Emergence of Pandemic (18th September)
- Containment of Pandemic (9th October)
- Mitigation of Pandemic (30th October)

Public Office (Accountability) Bill [Hillsborough Law]: We received a letter from DHSC Permanent Secretary, Samantha Jones, regarding the publication of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, also known as the Hillsborough Law. The Bill sets out a statutory duty for public authorities and officials to act with candour, transparency and frankness, particularly in their dealings with inquiries and investigations. It includes provisions to promote ethical conduct, introduces new offences for misleading the public or misconduct in public office, and abolishes the common law offence of misconduct in public office. While the Bill is not expected to receive Royal Assent for another 9-12 months, the Permanent Secretary has advised that public bodies should begin using it now as a lever for positive, sustainable cultural change. The Executive Team will reflect on its implications and consider how best to embed its principles in current practices.

2. Innovation

CAGT recently concluded an eight-week project with Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to develop a sustainable growth strategy for commercialisation of our cell and gene therapy manufacturing and delivery services. The outputs provided a clear focus on key areas for commercialisation and recommendations on how NHSBT could be structured to be more agile and competitive, ultimately resulting in improved patient access and outcomes from these innovative new therapies.

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation (OTDT): The OTDT Hospice Project has been shortlisted as finalists for the Picker Experience Network Awards (PENA) in the Communicating Effectively with Patients and Families Category 2025. The Palliative and End of Life Care team has delivered some great educational tools, supported by academic evidence and ready to be replicated across end-of-life care pathways. This is one of the reasons that the Hospice pilot continues to achieve growth in cornea donation activity.

Following a stakeholder summit in 2023, we initiated the Sustainability and Certainty in Organ Retrieval (SCORE) project to improve key aspects of the National Organ Retrieval Service. The aim is to move on from an ethos of 'as fast as possible', to one of predictability, allowing time for improved planning and better use of resources.

This is a big change because it means organs will arrive at transplant centres in the morning to enable daytime transplantation. We will update the stakeholders and the Board on delivery timescales in due course.

Key changes to the Liver Offering scheme went live in August. The change in split liver criteria change means that more children should receive the transplants they desperately need. This was also the first visible benefit of our investment in the Matching & Offering programme, and its speedy delivery is a credit to all involved.

We have obtained a further extension of the Exceptional Use Authorisation until February 2026 from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). This ensures our Genomic Programme led by Clinical Services directorate can continue delivering better result outcomes for sickle cell patients.

Blood Donation Waiting List: The Waiting list function, that will provide an alternative booking route for priority blood donors who cannot find a suitable appointment, is due to go live in October. The initial implementation will be available to B neg and Ro donors (due to smaller numbers) to ensure the booking process is working effectively, whilst exploring how to add a cohort of O negative donors as early as possible.

Group Bookings: Donor Experience has delivered an important new service to enable group bookings to be made, aimed at helping community groups to support us, and, particularly, to support the drive to increase donations by donors of Black heritage. Groups can now block-book appointments on dedicated days, making the experience easier and more supportive - especially for first-time donors. The service went live on 14th August and makes giving blood more welcoming, connected, and rooted in solidarity.

3. Donor and Patient Experience and Engagement Activity

IBI (Infected Blood Inquiry): NHSBT are awaiting a decision from DHSE on the spending review funding for the IBI recommendations. NHSBT has endorsed the IBI recommendations, but delivery is dependent on additional support from DHSC and NHSE, with current reliance on non-allocated funds from the recent Spending Review creating exposure to both delivery and reputational risk. Discussions are underway regarding potential funding scenarios, mitigation strategies, and the decisions required on whether to reprioritise internal resources, scale back delivery, and escalation processes.

Blood Marketing: In July, we launched our new Giving Type video, radio and social media advertising, including an impactful emergency-focused film inspiring people to take action and book an appointment. In August we aired the first episode of our Channel 4.0 partnership 'Love is in the Blood'. The series pairs experienced donors with first timers on a blind date and aims to inspire the next generation of donors by showing how natural and social giving blood can be.

Loyalty Programme: Following a successful 6-week discovery, preparations are underway for a second phase of work on a new donor loyalty proposition. The work will define and run a series of test-and-learn activities to help develop a new, modernised loyalty proposition that better meets the needs of our donors and supports retention.

Ongoing Support for Blood Stocks: Throughout the summer we continued to work with the media to promote donation. This included a 3-hour long outside broadcast with BBC Radio Lincolnshire spending a morning with the Lincoln mobile team with members of the BBC crew making their first donation. Launching the “Pint for Mike” campaign with BBC Breakfast which resulted in 1,716 new donor registrations plus 2.5k more appointment bookings than the previous Thursday. Our story highlighting the story of Black heritage patient Matthew Allick, who suffered a massive heart attack but was saved thanks to seven blood transfusions, also secured extensive national and regional TV, radio and print coverage.

Clinical and Research: We had excellent coverage for our story on “77,000 STRIDES donors being genotyped for precision-matched transfusion”, including Sky News, BBC R4 Today programme and several national papers.

NHS App: We have been working hard with NHS England to promote our services on the NHS App. From 1 September, a geographically targeted campaign is promoting the Brighton Donor Centre via the NHS App front page, running for one month and directing local users to register and book appointments. The new NHS App Organ Donation journey is due to be released w/c 28th September, with testing underway by NHSE and the NHSBT ODR team. The front-page Organ Donation campaign is due to go live in early October.

VIP Visits and Events: To support the launch of the Transplant Activity report, we held a Parliamentary reception hosted by Bambos Charalambous MP. We welcomed more than 50 MPs and peers to promote and share the importance of organ donation. We also welcomed Al Carns MP, Minister for Veterans & Labour MP for Birmingham Selly Oak to the Plasma Donation Centres in Birmingham and Tom Hayes MP, Labour MP for Bournemouth East to the Poole Donor Centre.

4. People

The annual *Our Voice Survey* launched on 8 September and will run for one month. A first cut of high-level results will be available to the Executive on 6 October.

The first phase of the Inclusive Learning project, part of the *Forward Together Programme*, is nearing completion. This phase will culminate in the launch of a new suite of *Inclusion Essentials* learning resources, designed to support leaders, managers, and teams on their inclusion learning journey.

In 2024, we successfully delivered our first Annual Conference, which brought together 230 colleagues from across the organisation. Our second Annual Conference took place on 23 September, hosted across 12 sites nationwide and connected via our technology platform. This year’s event focused on advancing delivery of the *NHS 10-Year Plan*.

The *Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HS&W)* Quarter 1 report for 2025/26 was presented to the Executive earlier this month. Key initiatives continue to progress as planned, including mental health training for managers, early stress reporting, and neurodiverse workplace needs assessments.

We're proud to share that Professor Mike Murphy has received the *Emily Cooley Memorial Award* from the *Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies (AABB)*, recognising his significant contributions to transfusion medicine. NHSBT subject matter experts also contributed to newly published AABB guidelines on red cell transfusion, supporting best practice across the field.

Finally, two initiatives in *Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation* have been shortlisted for prestigious *HSJ Awards*.

- TransplantPath, our organ offering system, is nominated in the *Driving Efficiency Through Technology* category.
- The Donor Family Care Service is shortlisted for *Communications Initiative of the Year*.

5. Finance

Our latest financial forecast for 2025–26 indicates a stable position and remains on course to deliver operations within the approved financial envelope for the year. We will continue to review plans to ensure a continued safe exit from the amber alert.

As we approach the second half of the year, the Integrated Business Planning process has now commenced. This process aligns our overall business planning framework and strategic objectives with the investment portfolio, budget build and cost improvement plans, among other key areas. The Board will be presented with an early view of the 2026-27 financial plan, including our latest funding and expenditure assumptions.

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