



## Summary of Implementation Steering group for Organ Utilisation (ISOU) Meeting, *June 2025*

### 1. Welcome and introductions – John Forsythe

The Chair welcomed members to the 11th meeting of ISOU.

The aim of the meeting was to summarise progress since the last ISOU meeting in April.

There were no actions outstanding that were not being picked up separately on the agenda.

#### Conflicts of Interest - All

No conflicts of interest were declared.

### 2. DHSC updates on actions since the previous meeting

John Forsythe updated on the **Workforce Template Symposium** that was held in early June. It should be noted that while work to merge NHS England and DHSC is ongoing, any recommendations made that would currently sit with NHSE should be considered within plans for future central health structures.

Group discussion on the event covered:

- The need to balance a high-level plan that covers systemic challenges, being as clear as possible about the specific workforce needs to meet transplant patients wider needs, including follow-up and psychosocial care and allowing Centres to reflect their local needs.
- the importance of medical students encountering organ transplant early on in their training at medical school to build a more resilient talent pipeline. Similarly, surgical rotations should include retrieval and transplant.
- It was noted that we should utilize the relationships we have built through other ISOU sub-groups to engage Trust leaders in this workstream.

Sub-Group co-chairs then updated on progress. Discussion started with sub-group recommendation reports that have been published since the April meeting:

- The **Trust Engagement [recommendation report](#)** and the Trust Organ Utilisation Strategy **[Guidance Document](#)** have been published on the ISOU website. Initial informal feedback from leaders of Trusts with transplant programmes has been encouraging and plans are being made locally to take actions forward.
- Plans to socialize the strategy and guidance document (inc. a webinar) with Trust leaders, clinicians and patients (perhaps via Organ Donation Committees) should be picked up once there is greater clarity from the Transplant Oversight Group on how the strategies and plans will be reviewed and monitored. This will give Trusts of different shapes and sizes the opportunity to better understand and ask questions about the task.
- The importance of maintaining momentum on this work was noted and a letter from Jim Mackey to all Trust CEOs on ISOU work, including Strategies is due to be sent out shortly.

- The [Patient Engagement sub-group's recommendations report](#) has also now been published on the ISOU website.
- The recommendations will be shared on a webinar with the wider Patient Engagement Best Practice group, noting that showing patients how their views have been considered is a fundamental part of effective patient engagement.
- NHSBT confirmed it is taking the sub-group's recommendations on board and is already in the process of recruiting additional patient representatives to its transplant groups and is in the process of appointing a Patient Engagement lead. **NHSBT will provide an update on progress of this recruitment at the next ISOU meeting in September.**

Updates from other sub-groups included:

- [Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics](#) (H&I) – following the sub-group's recommendation, a proposal is being considered by the NICE prioritization board on reviewing the clinical and cost effectiveness of donor derived cell-free DNA (dd-cfDNA) testing in solid organ transplantation settings (recommendation 5)
- **Xenotransplantation** – Research conducted for the sub-group on public attitudes to xenotransplantation by the Policy Implementation and Research Unit will be published shortly in the Lancet. The ISOU Secretariat will notify members once this takes place.
- [Assessment and Recovery Centres](#) (ARCs) – NHSBT is taking forward recommendations from the sub-group to establish a pilot ARC and developing plans for multi-year investment. **A further update on this workstream will be given at the September meeting.**
- **Digitisation of transplant systems** – Work on this OUG recommendation will be developed through a workshop similar to those we have run for Workforce and Commissioning that have provided very effective. Suggested invitee names are welcomed from ISOU members to ensure a diverse range of inputs on the day.

### 3. Organ Donation Join Working Group

This group is a sister workstream to ISOU and focuses on how to improve donor consent rates which have stagnated in recent years. A key part of this group's work, the **International Donation Action Forum** (IDAF) took place in early June. This brought together international experts, donor family representatives, NHSE, NHSBT, clinicians and health leaders to discuss the donation process across the UK and what we might learn from international partners. Devolved Government colleagues also attended. ISOU members discussed key themes coming from the IDAF and wider donor family surveys and discovery meetings. The NHSBT Board will be considering the report in September and then Ministers across the four nations will be asked to approve the report's publication.

### 4. Stakeholder Forum

Fiona Loud (Forum co-chair) summarised key areas of interest for members of the forum, including the establishment of the Clinical Director for Transplantation role across NHSE and NHSBT. **NHSE will share the job description with ISOU** to provide further insight into the role. Updates on timing can also be shared.

Fiona also flagged the need to focus on outcomes as much as, if not more than on numbers when it comes to transplant and also raised ongoing concern about the speed of progress with the cardiothoracic transplant transformation programme.

#### **NHSE update**

5. **Cardiothoracic Transformation update** – the Board will next meet in early July to agree ambitions that will shape the delivery programme for the work. These ambitions will be published - **NHSE will provide timings updates for this.**

Outputs from the accompanying **peer review of paediatric cardiothoracic transplant services** will feed into the wider Transformation programme.

## **6. Changing NHS landscape**

Work is ongoing to design a new structure that brings NHSE and DHSC together. Organ donation, transplantation and ISOU officials in DHSC are working closely with transformation colleagues across DHSC and NHSE to ensure organ transplant and utilisation is properly considered in new structures and that there is a valuable legacy from ISOU.

**Date of next meeting** – Wednesday 24 September