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**Tuesday, 24 March 2026**

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<b>Executive Summary</b>			
<p>This paper provides the Board with an update on the health of the blood donor base and the impact of donor recruitment and mobilisation activity during 2025/26 to date. It also outlines the strategic direction for strengthening donor engagement and donor base resilience over the coming years.</p> <p>In 2025/26 year to date (February) we have seen;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.9m whole blood bookings</li> <li>• 235k new donor registrations resulting in 131.5k New Donors Donating</li> <li>• Growth of the Ro donor base to the highest it has ever been at 27.5k donors.</li> </ul> <p>However while public willingness to donate remains strong and recruitment activity continues to attract new donors, the overall donor base has not grown at the pace required to provide long-term resilience. In the paper we have outlined various pain points experienced in driving donor base growth - we require new approaches and coordinated action to address the fundamental challenges to meet Oneq and Ro recruitment and collection across multiple areas including recruitment, retention, community engagement, operational capacity and donor experience.</p> <p>In order to demonstrate stronger effectiveness of activity in 2026/27 we will building our econometric modelling and attribution approach, and will be working alongside the ABO CMWG (cost model working group) who are keen to assess spend, establish benchmarks and assist with wider marketing cost attribution.</p> <p>We have also highlighted the Ro Taskforce and the Donor Engagement Review which will enable us to be more donor led, and set us up to be more productive, effective and efficient.</p>			



## **Blood Donor Mobilisation update 2025/26**

### **1.0 Executive summary**

This paper provides the Board with an update on the health of the blood donor base and the impact of donor recruitment and mobilisation activity during 2025/26 to date. It also outlines the strategic direction for strengthening donor engagement and donor base resilience over the coming years.

Maintaining a strong, diverse and sustainable donor base remains critical to NHSBT's ability to ensure a safe and secure blood supply for patients across the NHS. While public willingness to donate remains strong and recruitment activity continues to attract new donors, the overall donor base has not grown at the pace required to provide long-term resilience.

Key improvements across 2025/26 include:

- Our place-based integrated marketing activity has driven 131.5k new donors, and has contributed to the growth of the Ro donor base to the highest it has ever been at 27.5k.
- The introduction of the Priority Access Request Service, resulting in almost 6.5k booked appointments for O neg (4.8k), B neg (784) and Ro (917) donors.

There are a number of key drivers of opportunities for improvement in 2026/27 including:

- Through the Ro Taskforce (with the Donor Base Resilience Programme and Donor Network Design project) will be providing more local appointments for minority ethnic donors to strive towards meeting the Sickle Cell demand, more than doubling the supply from 41k units per week to 91k.
- The Donor Engagement Review will enable us to be more donor led, and set us up to be more productive, effective and efficient.

This paper sets out:

- The impact of recruitment and mobilisation activity delivered during 2025/26
- The current health of the donor base
- The influences on booking behaviour
- The strategic direction for strengthening donor engagement and mobilisation activity during 2026/27 and beyond

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the donor base requires new approaches and coordinated action to address the fundamental challenges to meet O neg and Ro recruitment and collection across multiple areas including recruitment, retention, community engagement, operational capacity and donor experience.

### **2.0 Impact of Donor Recruitment and Mobilisation activity**

As agreed in the Blood Operations Leadership Team (BOLT) sessions throughout 2025/26, we have continued to deliver a programme of activity aimed at attracting new donors and encouraging existing donors to book appointments. In the appendix there is more detail on the activity we have undertaken and plan to conduct in the remainder of the year.

Key indicators demonstrate continued engagement with new and potential donors. Year to date (February) we have seen;

- 3.8 million web and app visitors (2024/25 - 4.3 million for the full year as a result of the Amber alert)
- 2.6 million digital booking journeys initiated
- 235k new donor registrations (last year was 341k)
- 2.9m whole blood bookings
- 131.5k New Donors Donating, against a target of 130.5k year to date target (Last full year was 136k)

The number of new donors donating each week has increased compared to the previous year (up from 2563 to 2738) and average weekly whole blood booking volumes have also risen (from an average of 65k to 69k most recently), as a result of new centres opening and integrated communications to new and returning donors. These indicators demonstrate continued public engagement with blood donation and the effectiveness of our activity to acquire and mobilise donors, however this hasn't led to the desired growth in the donor base.

### 3.0 Health of the donor base

While NHSBT has continued to recruit new donors throughout 2025/26, and we have seen growth in critical Ro and Bneg groups, the overall active donor base has decreased slightly. This reflects the combined impact of donor attrition (with donors becoming inactive after not successfully donating within a 12-month period) and the ongoing challenge of building and sustaining engagement with donors over time. The following looks at various pain points and provides some detail on future plans to address them, which includes the two key drivers for improvement in 2026/27:

- The Ro Taskforce (with the Donor Base Resilience Programme and Donor Network Design project) will be providing more local appointments for minority ethnic donors to strive towards meeting the Sickle Cell demand, more than doubling the supply from 41k units per week to 91k.
- The Donor Engagement Review will enable us to be more donor led, and set us up to be more productive, effective and efficient

**3.1 Overall growth:** Our plan to meet donor base growth targets has been affected by attrition in the base, and because of donors inability to find the appointments they want despite an increase in the number of overall appointments available. During the second half of the year we have strategically restricted appointment availability for some blood groups (Apos, Bpos and Opos) in order to maintain appropriate stock levels, minimise wastage as well as providing sufficient appointment opportunities for priority groups. While operationally necessary to improve booking conditions for priority groups, this has had the effect of limiting opportunities for some donors to donate, therefore constraining donor base growth.

**Actions:** In 2026/27 we will be continuing to adopt our place-based marketing approach to recruit new and existing donors in key locations where we have a strong media landscape, more appointment capacity and room for growth in our current donor base size and shape (type, age). We will continue to ensure we carefully manage blood mix to prevent wastage and giving priority access to donors from essential blood groups.

**3.2 Fill rates:** The vast majority of our donors donate in mobile sessions, where the fill rates of appointments have stayed at a high level. There are some challenges with fill rates in some of the Donor Centres, due to donor behaviour changes following Covid – donors cite convenience as one of the most important factors to donation and generally want donations to be local to them.

**Actions:** Our integrated communications strategy, which is the bulk of our spend has had some success, based on the new donor volumes for this year. We have seen 253k new donor registrations to the end of February '26, resulting in 131.5k New Donors Donating, against a target of 130.5k year to date target. In '26/27 our recruitment and mobilisation activity across all channels (including targeted emails and community engagement activity) will continue to be centred around DCs in line with operational capacity. We have continued to push Donate Breaks through media activity and partnerships, which encourages businesses to allow donors time off during work hours to donate at a centre – to date our blood donation tracker has recorded 850 donations.

**3.3 Attrition and Loyalty:** Improving donor retention is essential to maintaining a resilient donor base. Analysis of donor behaviour indicates that more than 20% of donors who return to donate have waited over 13 months since their previous donation. The Oneg group generally has a higher average donation frequency as we ask more of them than other groups in order to support higher demand and substitutions, however while we are bringing in new Oneg donors, the inactivation of regular donors reduces the net impact of recruitment activity.

NHSBT also see the greatest drop off in engagement from donors who have given between 1-5 donations, and, as the current donor recognition scheme is focused on longer term value, it has limited impact at this donor lifestage.

**Actions:** We will be moving our definition of 'active' from 12 months to a 24 months timeframe to reflect the reality of donor bookings.

At the same time, we are developing more targeted donor communication journeys through NHSBT's CRM systems to encourage donors to return to donate before becoming inactive. Particular focus will be placed on priority donor groups such as O negative, B negative and Ro donors which will be supported by our Donor Segmentation Framework. This will see us develop in the region of 180 new tailored personalised communications—to boost engagement and encourage regular donation, using factors like donation type, activity, age, gender, ethnicity, and blood type

The redesign of the donor recognition programme into a broader loyalty proposition is also expected to support stronger donor engagement and encourage repeat donation by recognising donor contribution in a more modernised, meaningful and personalised way.

**3.4 Meeting Sickle Cell Demand:** For many years as a business we had targeted to only meet around 50% of the demand for blood (Ro) from Sickle Cell patients. Demand for Ro blood continues to increase due to the clinical needs of patients with sickle cell disease - this has caused downward pressure on both Oneg and Bneg stocks and donor bases as they are used for substitution.

**Actions:** The Ro Taskforce has been set up with an ambitious stretch target of aiming to meet 100% of demand by the end of November 2026, (which equates to 91k units per annum), as this will ease some of the pressure on stocks but more importantly help to tackle health inequalities. The Taskforce will look at clinical enhancements to help reduce deferrals of donors. It is also aiming to deliver the recommendations from the Donor Network Design project, specifically increasing collections from more communities with high black heritage populations to improve Ro collections. More details on the Ro Taskforce is included in the Appendices.

The Donor Base Resilience Programme is moving into delivery mode and will be setting up more community engagement and partnership activities to register and book in more black heritage donors (as well as recruiting more Oneg and Bneg donors), through programmes like group bookings, mass typing events and grassroots activity in communities with high levels of black heritage donors. We have seen 18 black heritage focused group bookings generating 366 individual appointments and have more planned. In early March, the team ran an event where over 60 Oneg donors booked appointments, so this approach will be rolled out further.

**3.5 Donor Engagement Review:** The alignment and approaches for donor engagement across NHSBT could be set up more effectively to meet the needs of donors.

The strategic approach, activities, capabilities, performance and structures will be assessed to ensure DX are much more donor-led and that the operation is set up to engage much more effectively and efficiently with donors.

**Actions:** The strategic approach, activities, capabilities, performance and structures will be assessed to ensure DX is much more donor-led and that the operation is set up to engage much more effectively and efficiently with donors. The review is addressing all donor recruitment and mobilisation activities to ensure our functions are optimally positioned to deliver maximum impact and continue to meet the evolving needs of our clinical demand and donor base growth. This review will identify strengths to build upon and areas for optimisation that will enhance our ability to recruit and mobilise donors for the future.

Alongside this work we will continue to develop our longer-term donor engagement strategy, supported by improved donor segmentation and data capability. These developments will enable more personalised engagement with donors and more effective mobilisation of the donor base.

We are looking at how we can benchmark our activity against other Allied Blood Operators (ABO's) as well as developing an updated econometric model that will provide more sophisticated insight into the relationship between various marketing and non-marketing drivers and their impact on key business metrics such as blood appointment bookings or new donor registrations.

**3.6 Booking funnel improvements:** With approximately 85% of donors now booking via the NHSBT app or online portal, the digital booking journey is a critical component of donor mobilisation. We have seen over 2.6 million digital booking journeys have been initiated across 2025/26 to date.

Analysis of conversion rates highlights a clear distinction between new and returning donors. New potential donors converting from starting a booking journey to successfully booking an appointment currently sit at 49.6%, whereas returning donors with one or more previous donations convert at 84.6%. This indicates that while the experience works well for established donors, there is greater opportunity to optimise the journey for those attempting to book for the first time.

Further analysis of the booking funnel shows that the highest levels of drop-off occur during venue and date selection, with around 26% of new users exiting the journey at the venue selection stage. For comparison, Australian Lifeblood report a conversion rate of approximately 67% from booking start to completion, indicating a potential benchmark for improvement.

**Actions:** In October–November 2025, NHSBT introduced the Priority Access Request Service, enabling donors who were unable to find a suitable appointment to submit a request for a preferred location and time. The service is currently targeted at Ro, Oneg and Bneg donors, where demand for appointments is highest and mobilisation is most critical. The pilot has delivered encouraging early results: by the end of February, almost 6.5k appointments had been secured through the service across Oneg (4.8k), Bneg (784) and Ro (917) donors. Importantly, 100% of appointment requests have been fulfilled, and donor feedback indicates that 75% of donors using the service would not otherwise have proceeded to book an appointment. Further iterative enhancements are planned during 2026/27, while longer-term solutions will be explored through DASP.

In parallel, work is underway with the DX Product Centre and DASP to improve visibility across the digital booking funnel. Currently, Google Analytics provides only high-level trend data, indicating that new donors most frequently exit at venue selection (14%) and date selection (11%). Enhanced tracking capabilities will enable NHSBT to gain more granular insight into where and why donors disengage, including the ability to analyse booking behaviour by donor characteristics such as blood group and ethnicity. This will allow us to better understand whether barriers are driven by location availability, session capacity or donor-specific factors, enabling targeted optimisation of the booking journey and helping to reduce drop-off across the funnel.

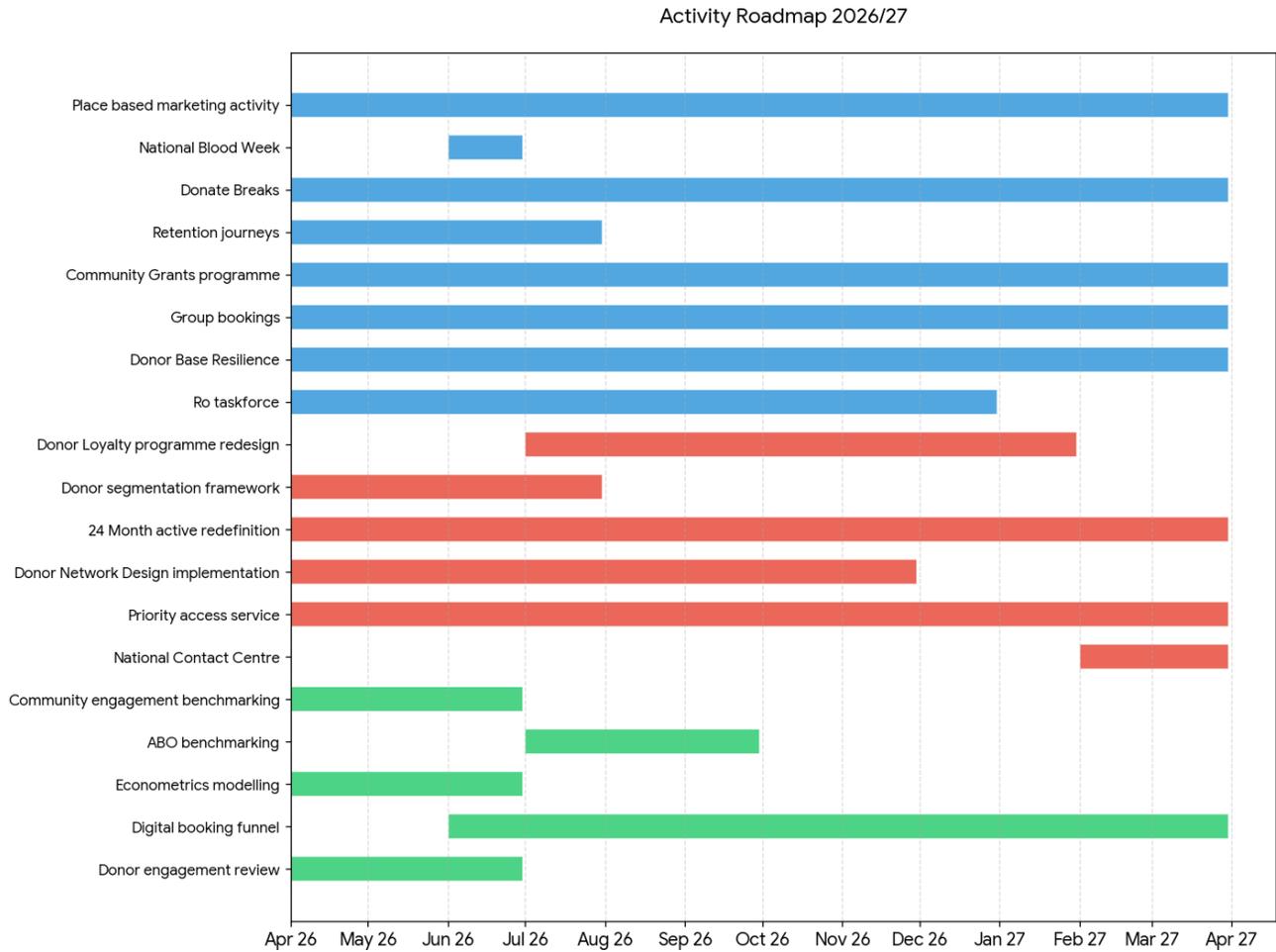
**3.7 Community Engagement:** Community engagement, mainly in black heritage communities, remains critical to ensuring the donor base reflects the needs of patients and supports the recruitment of donors with priority blood types. We currently work with more than 30 Community Grants Programme (CGP) partners who focus on blood donor engagement within Black heritage communities. The grants are small and focused on delivery of activity - more work is needed to analyse the impact of these activities (these range from short films on donation and the design of children's books on sickle cell to read with parents, to activity such as an interactive app game to encourage donation among young adults).

**Actions:** We are currently working with a Diversity Marketing specialist to review, benchmark and to help us set trackable targets for our CGP work - this work should report in May 2026. New approaches to targets for these partners will be built into the new agreements from September 2026. During 2026/27 the programme will evolve to support a mix of larger community projects and smaller grassroots initiatives designed to deepen engagement and build long-term relationships with community leaders, as well as pilot new approaches to building networks of organisations that can support initiatives such as blood typing. We will also be doing more to amplify the CGP activity and leverage authentic storytelling from these grassroots organisations.

**3.8 National Contact Centre:** Our contact centre supports inbound and outbound contact from donors. This makes up 25-30% of blood appointment bookings, but the operation is a challenge in that lots of people don't answer their phones and we are trying to encourage donors to book into appointments that self-serving donors don't want, so they tend to be hard to fill.

**Actions:** Across '26/27 through projects like Donor Network Design we are looking to provide more appointments for donors to self-serve, which will reduce the reliance on the contact centre. We are also re-tendering our contact centre services with the aim of providing more options for donors, to enable them to use channels of their choice and providing a modern enabler for DASP. From April '26 we will strengthen performance management to drive higher conversion and explore advanced dialler strategies, supported by additional first-party data from NHSBT to improve contact rates and optimise call timing. In addition we will be extending digital adoption and delivering a modernised out-of-hours service which should deliver savings.

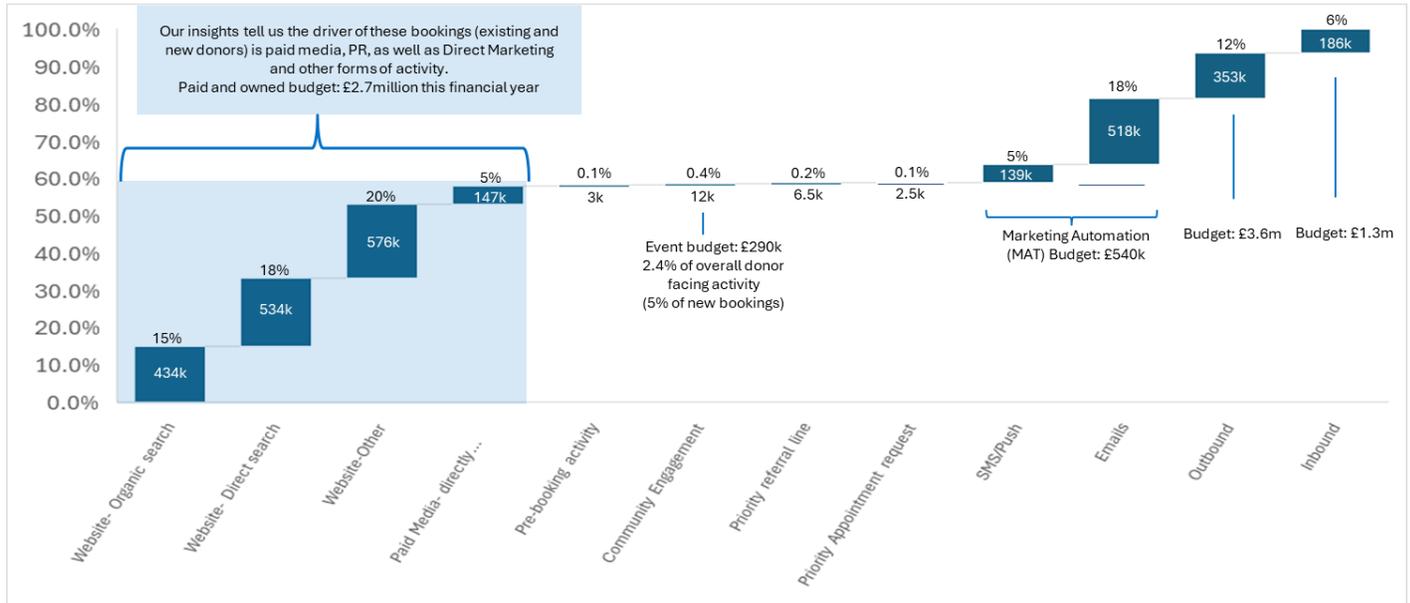
Below is a visual representation of key activities across 2026/27 as referenced previously.



#### **4.0 Understanding blood appointment booking behaviour – ‘25/26 year to date (up to February 2026)**

Blood donation decisions are rarely driven by a single communication or intervention. Instead, donor behaviour is typically influenced by multiple interactions across different channels and engagement activities.

To demonstrate booking performance we have used a simplified last touch attribution model – this shows the immediate source of the booking and does not capture the broader contribution of activity that drives donor behaviour.



\* The costs included here are non-pay costs.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Maintaining a resilient donor base remains fundamental to ensuring a safe and sustainable blood supply for patients across the NHS. While recruitment and mobilisation activity continues to attract new donors and encourage donation, the overall donor base has not grown at the pace required due to donor attrition and operational constraints.

Through efforts to improve retention and operational capability as well as continued investment in community partnerships, improved donor engagement strategies and strengthened capability, NHSBT aims to build a more resilient and diverse donor base capable of meeting the needs of patients both now and in the future.

## 6.0 Ask of the Board/ET

The Board is asked to:

- Recognise the progress that has been made across 2025/26
- Understand the range of pain points in donor engagement and support activity across 2026/27
- Support increased community engagement activity and attend events
- Attend a future workshop to understand and review strategic plans and our econometric modelling

Appendix 1

# 2025/26 Impact of marketing and communications activity

## Spring/Summer 25/26

### Highlights of Activity

- Launched our new 'Be There' advertisement
- 'Love is in the blood' content series with Channel 4.0 to engage younger audiences through interesting content
- Simply Sayo's 'It takes a village' campaign to inspire more black heritage donors
- Next best action (paid media innovation) deployed using appointment availability to drive media investment
- Delivered National Blood Week with mix of paid and media activity calling for one million donors
- Developed strategic partnership with Port Royal Patties to deliver on-pack promotion of blood donation
- 'My Blood your Blood' book launch into schools to encourage black heritage parents to register to donate
- Disney 'Ironheart' / Community Grants activation using our partners to deliver authentic content based around Disney concepts.
- Community engagement events at Freshers Fairs
- Launched a new pre-booking approach for enrolled donors self declared as O-/B-
- Locally relevant activations to support opening of Southampton and Brighton Donor Centres
- 18.5 million Direct marketing emails with new appointment reminder and readiness journeys created to improve attendance and donation rates
- 3.6 million outbound calls and 283k inbound calls

**~118m impressions on paid media**

### Outcomes

**Avg. weekly WHB bookings (inc. future bookings) – 61k**  
**Avg. weekly end of week PFM bookings – 895**

- 19% increase in end-of-week new donor appointment bookings where target areas were supported by paid (excl. London)
- Next best action resulted in 2% uplift in WHB appointment bookings
- 69% increase in appointment bookings from community engagement events compared to prior yr
- 5% increase in overall new donor donations
- 13% increase in Black Heritage new donor donations
- 24% increase in new to donation PFM donations
- 1.6k new donors donating at Brighton Donor centre with 30% of all donations from donors aged 35 and below

*Channel 4.0 have commented that our Love is in the Blood series has achieved some of the best results it's ever seen, particularly resonating with younger and ethnically diverse views:*

- *There have been 13 million views to date versus the 6.3 million that Channel 4.0 committed to achieve*
- *95% of respondents rated the clips 3-5 stars*

\* Impressions are the total number of times an ad or content is displayed – it gives the total potential audience exposure for content.

# 2025/26 Impact of marketing and communications activity

## Autumn/Winter 25/26\*

### Highlights of Activity

- Continuation of 'Be There' advertisements and 'Love is in the blood' content series
- London bus takeover campaign (3 wrapped buses and on bus billboards) supported by MP's and influencers
- Regional and national media coverage for 'Pint4Mike', 'It takes' a village' as well as Christmas 'super donors' that was exclusive on BBC Breakfast
- CityMapper display ads putting London donor centres 'on the map'
- 'Blood is needed every day' social posts
- Supligen branding partnership launched with the Jamaican High Commissioner
- Launch of the Priority appointment request and priority line to request an appointment even if fully booked
- Local activations to support Brighton DC and Wolverhampton including the first regionally targeted NHS app homepage campaign that reached 146k+ people in Brighton
- Whatsapp messaging to reduce Do Not Attends (DNA's) for Ro donors
- Community Grants Programme partner activity i.e. We are donors 'Cell jump' app game to promote the need for donation with young audiences
- Skintone plasters about to be distributed
- 15 million Direct marketing emails
- 2.4 million outbound calls and 159k inbound calls

**~85m impressions on paid media**

### Outcomes

- Avg. weekly WHB bookings (inc. future bookings) – 69k**
- Avg. weekly end of week PFM bookings – 808**
- Average of ~2,200 Black Heritage appointment bookings per week in January, 13% uplift vs. average week
- Marked uplift in reactivation from priority donors compared to prior year, +40% for O-/B- and +31% for Ro donors
- Increased the New Donors Donating numbers in the mobile programme by 300 per week through new Pulse utility
- Reduced appointment DNA's for Ro donors by 30-40%
- Additional 6.5k Oneg, Bneg and Ro appointments booked using the priority appointment requests/booking line between Nov and Jan 26 (75% said they wouldn't have booked without this feature)
- Brighton donor centre – 1.6k new donors donating (c34%)
- Average days of platelet stocks at highest since 2020

\* Autumn/Winter 25/26 is up until January 2026

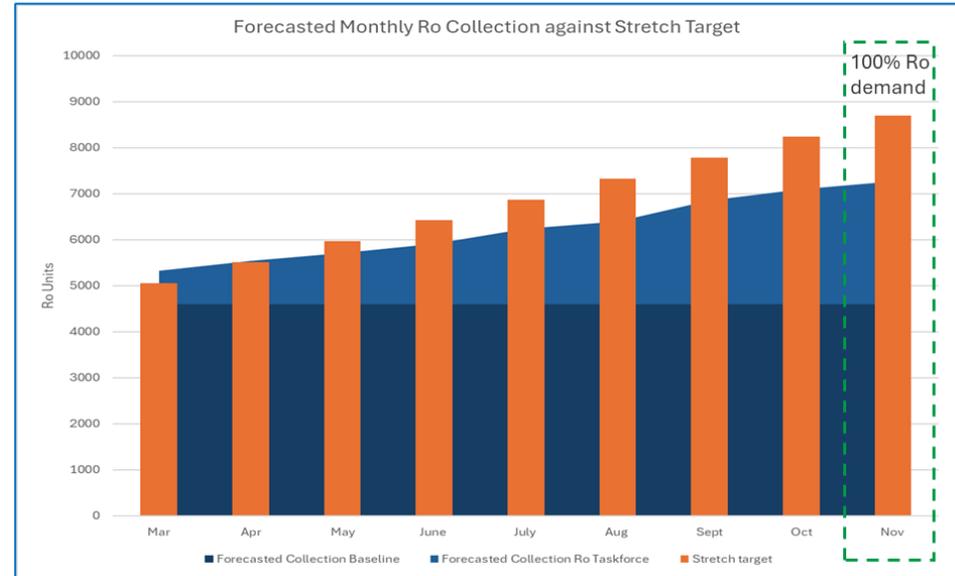
Appendix 2

## Ro Taskforce activity is forecast to significantly close the gap by November 2026, with additional initiatives being explored

**Glidepath insights:**

- The stretch target increases by an **additional 455 Ro** units per month to 8700 units by November 2026, which represents 100% of forecasted Ro demand
- Assuming the Ro baseline remains at 4600 units collected per month, the Taskforce is responsible for **closing the variance** between the baseline and the stretch target
- Based on existing identified activity, the Taskforce is forecast to **initially exceed** the target between March-April before **falling behind** the required run rate from May onwards
- Additionally, there are **more opportunities** that have been identified that may be able to close the gap further following further discovery and design work (see next slide)

**Ro collections Glidepath:**



Month	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Forecasted Collection Baseline	4600	4600	4600	4600	4600	4600	4600	4600	4600
Forecasted Collection Ro Taskforce	723	945	1105	1314	1644	1800	2255	2496	2672
Stretch target	5055	5510	5965	6420	6875	7330	7785	8240	8700
Variance to stretch target	268	35	-260	-506	-631	-930	-930	-1144	-1428