



Blood and Transplant

NHSBT Public Board Meeting

29 September 2026

Chief Executive's Report

Status: Official

Over the past two months I have continued to focus on maintaining strong operational performance while progressing a number of our strategic priorities. I have been pleased to see us strengthen key external partnerships, advance our transformation agenda, and reinforce our leadership role in national discussions on transplantation, commissioning and research.

I would like to thank all of the colleagues who have supported blood stocks through what has been a demanding summer of successive heatwaves, and I am grateful to everyone across the organisation whose efforts continue to keep our services running for the patients and donors who rely on us.

Patients and donors are always placed at the heart of everything we do, and it is vital that their insights and experiences inform our work. We received 1,104 responses to the survey launched by the Patient and Donor Engagement policy team about current practices and opportunities for improvement with how patients and donors are engaged in our policy development and service improvement. I am grateful to everyone who responded to the survey or attending meetings. I am committed to ensuring that your voices continue to be heard and inform our work in saving lives. I look forward to the stakeholder workshop this month and hearing more about how we can improve patient and donor engagement approaches in the future.

1. Service Delivery

Blood Supply

As of 1 September, total red cell stocks are in a healthy position at 7.6 days of stock. Two blood groups remain below target levels: AB-negative is at 5.3 days of stock and B-negative is at 4.0 days of stock. Stocks of O-negative have improved to target levels in recent days and now stand at 5.6 days of stock.

Five successive heatwaves placed considerable pressure on the blood collection system over the summer. Despite this, blood stocks have remained above alert levels throughout the summer. Platelet stocks have remained resilient over this period, and, as of the August Bank Holiday, all groups were at or above target levels.

Ro unit collection for the first seven months of the calendar year is 12% higher than the same period in 2025, with July's collections and issues the highest on record.

However, demand has also increased meaning that the overall gap between demand and supply remains at 50% and certain communities remain underserved. We are building on recent successes with Ro unit collection approaches, including a Bloodmobile visiting areas of London not currently served by blood donation sessions and the launch of a campaign targeting registrations from Black heritage communities.

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation

Since April, donation opportunities and the number of people donating has declined significantly month-on-month, with donor numbers currently 9% below the same period last year. The reasons behind this accelerating decline are not yet fully understood although we do understand that complexities of the pathway mean that work is required by NHSBT, NHS Trusts and NHSE to explain and understand the situation.

NHSBT has launched an intensive period of action to recover, with the aim of achieving three consecutive months of improvement and setting organ donation back on an upward trajectory. It is expected to deliver urgent improvements to the pathway and secure more donors. In addition, we are working closely with our partners to ensure the solutions are understood together.

The liver and lung Assessment and Recovery Centres pilots are live, and both have delivered their first transplants from organs that would otherwise have been declined. The first ex vivo lung perfusion and subsequent transplant took place in July, followed by a second case in August, while the first liver machine perfusion and subsequent transplant took place in June. These early cases demonstrate the viability of the Assessment and Recovery Centre concept.

Clinical Services

The Birmingham Advanced Therapeutics Unit has completed manufacture of the cellular therapy batches for the University College London-led AMELIE clinical trial, which treated six patients with faecal incontinence following childbirth using a regenerative therapy made from their own muscle cells. Patients have reported feeling positive about the potential of the treatment to improve their quality of life and help prevent incontinence.

The world's first successful transplant of a perfused human pancreas has also taken place, as part of the Hypothermic Oxygenated Pancreas Perfusion study led by the University of Oxford and delivered through the NHSBT Clinical Trials Unit. This emerging technology may better protect the pancreas during storage, with the potential to improve organ quality and transplant outcomes.

Therapeutic Apheresis Services have launched a new red cell exchange service in Milton Keynes, enabling patients with sickle cell disease to receive treatment closer to home. Previously, many patients travelled long distances to Oxford, London and other centres for their regular treatment.

Donor Experience

Donor Experience performance remains strong, with year-to-date satisfaction at 86.1%, which is ahead of target. Complaint volumes have continued to reduce when compared with the same period last year, and complaint response performance improved to 94% compliance with the 18-working-day standard in July. Compliment volumes have increased, with 6.6 compliments received for every complaint, up from 5.2 a year earlier. A new donor deferral re-engagement journey has been launched across blood, platelet and plasma donation, so that donors deferred for low haemoglobin, travel-related reasons, or tattoos and piercings receive tailored communications throughout their deferral period and when they become eligible to donate again. The initiative is designed to improve donor retention and make it easier for donors to return following a temporary deferral.

Activities throughout the summer have contributed around 1,900 new donor donations, including more than 380 from priority donors. Priority Access functionality has been extended to enable Ro, O-negative and B-negative donors to request appointments at fully booked sessions. Early use indicates strong demand for lunchtime and evening slots, giving us valuable insight into donor preferences and helping us better meet the needs of priority donors.

A new self-service process has been introduced, allowing donors to update their personal details online without needing to contact the call centre. The change was developed in response to donor feedback and supports a more inclusive and accessible donor experience.

Digital

Enhancements to the National Liver Offering Scheme have been successfully implemented. The new scheme will increase organ offers for very young, very sick liver recipients and increased prioritisation of long-waiting recipients. It will also reduce the number of late-offer declines and allocate more organs to named patients. The National Liver Offering Scheme review is available on the NHSBT website. This successful delivery demonstrates NHSBT's growing capability to implement allocation scheme changes quickly, safely and efficiently, strengthening our ability to respond to future clinical and service needs.

The Donor Experience Product Centre has launched a new Priority Access Request capability, enabling donors with high-demand blood groups to indicate their availability for appointments. Since launch, over 3,000 requests have been submitted by O-negative, B-negative and Ro donors, supporting the Ro Task Force and strengthening donor engagement and retention.

Quality & Governance

Following findings arising from the Nottingham University Hospitals Maternity Review (Ockenden), which included consideration of mortuary practices at Nottingham University Hospital, NHSBT took the precautionary step of temporarily suspending the Third-Party Agreement under which local staff undertook eye retrieval activity on NHSBT's behalf. An audit completed by NHSBT's Quality Assurance team identified

actions that are now being implemented, with reinstatement of the agreement dependent on satisfactory completion. Donor referral activity has continued throughout, with NHSBT teams undertaking retrievals directly to maintain service continuity and ensure compliance with quality standards

Underwriters Laboratory and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) visited NHSBT's Reagents and Protein Development and Production Unit services in Liverpool and Filton. Inspectors provided positive assurance on the maturity and effectiveness of the Quality Management System, highlighting colleagues' professionalism, a strong quality culture and robust risk management processes. Underwriters Laboratory has recommended the unit be added to the ISO13485 accreditation scope.

The Clinical Governance maturity review is underway. The closure meeting for the Infection Prevention Control review returned a Moderate rating, with a number of good practices commended alongside seven medium-priority and one low-priority recommendation; actions are underway to strengthen these further, and the final report is awaited.

There are two open Patient Safety Incident Investigations, on track for completion within their scheduled timeframes. Digital Clinical Safety actions are also underway, supported by external consultants Safehand, to develop the organisational processes and resources needed to achieve compliance with the digital safety standards.

2. Innovation

Research and Development

Teams across NHSBT collaborated to submit bids to the Medical Research Council and National Institute for Health and Care Research as part of the Biomedical Research Centre call. If successful, the research will support world-leading research into next-generation blood products that are safer, more available and less dependent on donor supply.

Submissions for the National Institute for Health and Care Research Blood and Transplant Research Units two-year extension have been made, with outcomes awaited.

The Scientific Advisory Committee met successfully on 9 September. The Committee was appraised of the governance process leading into 2025/26 and welcomed the Board's consideration of a future Board sub-committee on Research & Development.

NHSBT is among the world leaders in many important clinical areas, supporting research and clinical trials that are delivering improvements in patient care. During a recent visit to the University Hospitals Birmingham Stem Cell Transplant Unit, NHSBT's clinical innovation delivered in partnership with the clinical community was highlighted, including the globally significant CAR-T trials, one of the two largest graft-versus-host disease trials in the world. This has been delivered as a key member of Advanced Clinical Trials Limited (ACT), which supports novel clinical trials in blood cancer and stem cell transplantation. NHSBT will continue to build on this activity and

grow its research, development and partnerships, so that more patients can benefit from innovations in clinical care.

Cell and Gene Therapies

NHSBT continues to see strong collaborative working with colleagues at the University of Cambridge and Cambridge University Hospitals Trust, most recently highlighted during a visit to Cambridge. NHSBT also continues to work with partners and funders, both on applications for funding calls and to increase the number of calls available in blood and transplantation.

Department of Health and Social Care Stem Cell Review

NHSBT are continuing to support the Department of Health and Social Care's Stem Cell Review, which was established to improve the stem cell donation and transplantation processes and save more lives through the gift of stem cell donation. We have met on multiple occasions with the review team and hosted visits with John Forsythe, Chair of the Review, to discuss our experiences and where there are opportunities for improvement. NHSBT will be participating in the stakeholder workshop in November, to share insights learned and direction of travel for their recommendations, with the final report due to be submitted to Ministers by the end of the year.

3. Partnership and Engagement Activity

National Blood Week marked the tenth anniversary of the Missing Type campaign and was supported by a range of donor recruitment and community engagement activities, including work with community ambassadors and activity linked to World Sickle Cell Day, helping to raise awareness of blood donation and the need for greater donor diversity. NHSBT's 'Be There' blood donation campaign recently reached its first anniversary, having generated more than 40 million views and driven over 88,000 visits to blood.co.uk. A successful donor recruitment campaign also called for more O-negative, B-negative and Ro donors to support blood stocks during the summer holiday period. Preparations are nearing completion for a pilot enabling eligible donors at selected donor centres to reclaim travel expenses, which will assess whether reducing travel costs can improve donor attendance and retention while delivering value for money.

Organ Donation Week will take place in September, supported by a national multi-channel campaign across PR, social media, community engagement and partner communications. By the end of July, 263,000 people had registered their decision, 9% higher than the same point last year, with a further 990,000 people reconfirming their existing choice. The Statistics Team has produced and published the annual Organ Donation and Transplantation Activity Report, providing a detailed picture of organ donation and transplantation activity across the UK, helping NHSBT, transplant centres and healthcare partners monitor trends, benchmark performance and support continuous improvement in patient care.

During August, NHSBT secured significant media and digital engagement through a series of patient, donor and clinical stories highlighting the impact of donation and transfusion. This included the story of London actor Nikki Fagbemi, whose one-woman Edinburgh Fringe show explored her experience of living with sickle cell disease and relying on regular blood transfusions. Extensive coverage was also secured for the Assessment and Recovery Centres, including on ITV Good Morning Britain, ITV National News, the Daily Mirror and Sky News. The annual Transplant Activity Report highlighted that family support for organ donation has fallen by a fifth over the past five years. Communications activity around the Transplant Games celebrated the contribution of athletes, volunteers and NHSBT colleagues.

Stuart Andrew MP, then Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, visited a mobile donation session in Daventry on 17 August, following earlier discussions in Parliament, providing an opportunity to discuss NHSBT's national resilience and infrastructure, blood stocks and sufficiency, and future plasma plans. On 28 August, Ed Davey and other Liberal Democrat MPs visited Brixton Donor Centre to meet the team and donate blood as a group. This visit attracted good media attention and an opportunity to engage with multiple parliamentarians about the importance of our services and how they can support blood, plasma and organ donation. We will continue to engage with MPs to organise similar events to further raise awareness.

4. People

Health and Wellbeing

Accident targets have been met for the period April to July. The trial of the Neurodiversity Work Needs Assessments has also been completed, showing evidence of a decrease in absence following assessment. The process has now been approved for implementation, with a further review to take place in 12 months' time. Over the past two years, NHSBT's Forward Together Programme has focused on embedding inclusion, equality and anti-racism into our culture. The organisation is working to transition this from a programme into the way we operate every day, ensuring the work becomes embedded, measurable and sustainable across the organisation.

The Our Voice annual employee survey begins on 28 September. The survey will run for four weeks, with headline results available shortly after closure and more detailed analysis to follow. This year's annual NHSBT Staff Conference will take place in Bristol on Thursday 15 October, giving colleagues a focus on our overall priorities, our strategic future and how we work as One NHSBT.

Recruitment to the Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer and Director of Operations covering blood and plasma, roles will conclude in October 2026. These appointments will provide additional leadership capacity in two areas that are critical to the delivery of NHSBT's strategic and operational portfolios.

5. Finance

The 2026/27 commissioning round for Blood and Components and Specialised Services concluded, with the 2.5% average price increase approved by the National Commissioning Group, NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care.

However, like organisations across the NHS we have a tight financial position. Achieving the 2026/27 plan requires disciplined cost control and delivery of a significant cost savings. The year to date position is ahead of plan, with blood income slightly below plan being offset with several underspends. To deliver the plan for this year NHSBT still needs to identify opportunities to meet the cost savings target.

NHSBT is also turning attention to the Integrated Business Planning for next year. The financial position will remain tight, with the need for further significant cost savings. Over the coming months, we will complete the cost estimates for delivering our services next year, evolve the cost improvement plans for next year, and start discussions with the National Commissioning Group about the appropriate price increase for 2027/28 that balances the need for robust cost control and the need for the continued delivery of high quality and reliable services that are critical to the NHS and patients.

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