Department of Health & Social Care

DHSC Update to NHBST Public Board, 1 December 2026

DHSC sponsorship and policy team

- In October 2026, the DHSC sponsorship and policy team has said farewell to Olivia Davies who moved onto her next Civil Service Fast Stream posting. We have also welcomed Eisha Tandon to the team who joins us for this year as our Fast Stream Policy Advisor.

Substances of Human Origin (SoHO)

- The EU SoHO Regulation entered into force in 2024 and will apply in EU Member States from August 2027. Under the Windsor Framework the EU legislation will apply in Northern Ireland (NI) from 7 August 2027 but does not apply in England, Scotland and Wales (GB), where UK legislation will remain in place.
- The Regulation expands the definition of SoHO to cover "any substance collected from the body" that may be applied to humans in the future and covers a wide range of activities from registration and testing of donors, collection and processing to human application and clinical outcome monitoring of SoHO. An explanatory memorandum setting out the potential impacts was submitted to the NI Democratic Scrutiny Committee and the relevant UK Parliamentary Committees in 2024.
- SoHO in scope of the EU legislation in NI include blood and blood components, both for transfusion and medicines, tissues and cells both reproductive and non-reproductive, intestinal microbiota, human breast milk and placenta.
- Implementation of the EU SoHO regulation in NI is undertaken by the Department of Health NI for all devolved matters including the designation of a national SoHO authority and substance-specific competent authorities.
- As regulation of reproductive tissues and cells is a reserved matter, DHSC leads implementation of this and has confirmed continued designation to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Association as the competent authority for these substances in NI
- In 2024 DHSC Ministers commissioned a detailed review of the impacts of the EU SoHO Regulation, the changes that could be made in GB and additional measures NI could consider beyond the EU SoHO Regulation. A call for evidence and substance-specific roundtables with stakeholders, including regulators and Devolved Governments, have taken place and a draft report is being finalised for publication by the end of this year.

Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO) Advisory Committee

- The final SaBTO committee of 2026 took place on Wednesday 4 November 2026. The minute from the November meeting will be published in due course and will

be available alongside previous SaBTO minutes and documents on the Gov.UK SaBTO pages.

- DHSC will launch recruitment to SaBTO posts shortly and would welcome discussions with, or applications from any interested parties.
- Thanks to all in NHSBT who support the work of the advisory committee either as members or secretariat.

Ongoing policy work

- DHSC is continuing policy work on SoHO regulation review, SaBTO recommendations and new opportunities in blood, plasma, organ commissioning and organ safety.
- Thanks to all in NHSBT supporting that policy work.
- Upcoming policy publications include: SoHO Regulatory Review Report, ISOU (Implementation Steering Group for Organ Utilisation) Implementation Progress Update to October 2026, Transfusion Transformation Action Plan, Joint Blood Stocks Working Group Report (JBSWG).

DHSC transformation

- Earlier this month, the Secretary of State wrote to all DHSC and NHSE staff setting out the next steps for the transformation, which will help to deliver the vision outlined in the 10 Year Health Plan and the Prime Minister's priorities for rewiring the state.
- On 1 April 2027, subject to the passage of the Health Bill, NHSE will be abolished with the vast majority of its functions and teams coming into the department.
- Two distinct leadership groupings will continue within the new DHSC, working very closely together. The departmental group, focused on departmental priorities and business, and the NHS group, focused on NHS operational delivery.
- The seven NHS regional teams will continue their work, hosted in a transitional Special Health Authority. This will be a temporary arrangement that will support the transition to a more devolved model.
- Later this month, we will publish the new target operating model, which will give a high-level guide to how the new DHSC will work. It will cover purpose, structures, governance, capabilities, workforce and culture.