



Blood and Transplant

REPORT TO LEEDS CITY COUNCIL HEALTH SCRUTINY BOARD

1.0 NHS Blood and Transplant

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) was established as a Special Health Authority in October 2005 – with the merger of the National Blood Service (NBS), UK Transplant and Bio Products Laboratory.

The organisation collects, tests and processes almost 2 million blood donations from volunteer donors every year to ensure a consistent supply of blood donations to hospitals. The organisation also makes some 5500 organ and cornea transplants possible every year. In addition, it retrieves and stores other tissues, such as skin and bone, ready for patient use. It manufactures a range of therapeutic products from blood plasma and provides a number of related specialist services, such as solid organ tissue typing and cord blood.

NHSBT is responsible for optimising the supply of blood, organs, plasma and tissues and raising the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of blood and transplant services.

2.0 National Blood Service Strategy

NHSBT published its strategy for the NBS in November 2006. It sought to address the main challenges which the service faces, namely the need to:

- meet the clinical need and demand for red cells and platelets and address the declining numbers of blood donors;
- ensure greater efficiency and flexibility in our processing and testing facilities to meet current and future clinical, safety and accreditation standards;
- provide a range of specialist (diagnostic) services which cover their costs and meet identified patient need;
- stabilise the price of red cells, supplying them to hospitals at a cost which represents value for money for the NHS.

The strategy proposed the consolidation of the existing 11 (processing) and 10 (testing) centres to three major centres based in Filton near Bristol, Colindale and Manchester. The number of blood issue centres at which blood is stored and from which it is dispatched to hospitals, was also to be reduced.

3.0 Review of National Blood Service Strategy

In July 2007, the Board of NHSBT commissioned a review of the NBS strategy. While the challenges identified in the strategy have not changed, concerns about some aspects of the strategy had been raised by staff, hospitals and other stakeholders. The review – undertaken between October and December 2007 – sought to address these.

3.1 Stakeholder Engagement

As part of the review, a series of meetings was held with hospitals and other stakeholders to discuss the challenges which the NBS faces and the proposed actions to address these.

These included 3 regional meetings held in November 2007 and a number of local meetings. Representatives from The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust attended these meetings.

The main concerns expressed at these meeting focused on the following:

- The Red Cell Immunohaematology (RCI) reference service¹ should remain close to hospitals and patients;
- Blood should continue to be stocked and issued at Leeds;
- The location of blood processing and testing was less important than specialist services;

Having listened to stakeholders, NHSBT undertook further analysis to consider whether it should consolidate to a more geographically-balanced configuration of sites, retaining locally-based services for hospitals and patients - wherever possible - while still making the necessary changes to run a more efficient service.

3.2 Review Findings

The review findings, published in January 2008, confirmed the broad direction for the service set out in the original strategy, but made significant changes to the way in which it is to be implemented.

The review identified excess capacity in blood processing and testing facilities of 40% and 35% respectively. The decision was taken, therefore, to consolidate blood production to 6 processing and 5 testing centres over the next 3 years – as opposed to the 3 major centres proposed in the original strategy - retaining a good geographical spread across the country.

The 6 processing centres will be located at:

Brentwood
Colindale
Filton
Manchester
Newcastle
Sheffield

The 5 testing centres will be located at:

Colindale
Filton
Manchester
Newcastle
Sheffield

¹ This service investigates and provides blood for complex patients

3.3 Implications for the Leeds Blood Centre

Under the current implementation plan, testing services will move from the Leeds Centre by the end of 2009/10; processing services will move by the end of 2009/10.

Following these changes, processing and testing services will be provided by NBS blood centres at Sheffield, Manchester and Newcastle.

The following services will remain at the Leeds Blood Centre:

- The blood issue department will remain open and continue to supply local hospitals with blood as and when it is needed. The centre will continue to hold at least the same stock levels of blood and blood products as currently, including the requirement for short shelf-life components;
- The RCI reference service

In discussion with hospitals, the NBS plans to withdraw from routine antenatal screening across the country by the end of 2009/10. As the Health Scrutiny Board may be aware, two-thirds of the NHS currently uses antenatal screening services supplied by routine NHS pathology services (from outside the National Blood Service).

NHSBT anticipates that these changes will result in the reduction of around 70 posts at the Leeds Centre over the next 2 years. NHSBT is committed to making this reduction through non-compulsory means, wherever possible, including voluntary redundancy, staff turnover, redeployment and vacancy control.

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