



**One Hundred and Fifty Seventh meeting of the NIBTS Agency Board
Thursday 17 June at 11.30am
Venue: Video Conferencing meeting**

Present: Ms Bonnie Anley – Non-Executive Chair
Mr Ian Henderson – Non-Executive Member
Mr Philip Cathcart – Non-Executive Member
Mrs Karin Jackson – Chief Executive

In attendance: Mr Glenn Bell – Finance & IM&T Manager
Ms Angela Macauley – Quality & Regulatory Compliance Manager
Mrs Alison Geddis – Laboratory & Donor Services Manager
Dr Joanne Murdock – Medical Director

Mrs Alison Carabine – Minutes

1. Apologies

Mrs Lorraine Lindsay and Mr Ivan Ritchie

2. Declaration of potential conflict of interests with any business items on the agenda

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3. Minutes of One Hundred and Fifty Sixth meeting held on 6 May 2021 and action list

The minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and signed off by the Chair.

All actions had been completed.

4. Matters arising from minutes of meeting held on 6 May 2021

None

5. Chair's Business

- Ms Anley noted from the Chief Executive's report that the Laboratory and Donor Services Manager will be retiring at the end of August 2021. Ms Anley thanked Mrs Geddis for her contribution to the Board and wished her well in her retirement.
- Ms Anley advised that on 14 May 2021, she had tendered her resignation to DoH due to family commitments. DoH requested that Ms Anley not resign at this juncture. In order to maintain stability of the Board, Ms Anley agreed to retract her resignation and will remain as the Non-Executive Chair of NIBTS.
- NEM appointments – Ms Anley advised that there has been no further update from DoH Public Appointments Unit. However, they are aware that the extended tenure

- of the three NEMs will expire in November 2021. Ms Anley further advised that the business case for the fourth NEM has been submitted.
- Northern Ireland Chairs' Forum and HSC Chairs' Forum – No further updates.
 - BSO Internal Audit – Board Effectiveness Audit – Ms Anley advised that there was still work to complete and would like an action plan to refer to. An action plan to address findings will be developed.
 - Board Self-Assessment – Ms Anley thanked the NEMs for their contributions thus far to assist the completion of this document and highlighted that compliance with Good Practice needs to be included. Mrs Jackson and Mr Bell submitted sections to Ms Anley last year and Mrs Jackson advised that she will review and re-submit to Ms Anley. Ms Anley further advised that Section 4 – Stakeholder Engagement needs to be completed. Ms Anley noted that this document should be completed by the Board meeting of 14 October 2021. An Action Plan will also be required.
 - KPIs – Ms Anley noted the report is tabled at this meeting and will be further discussed at the next Governance & Risk Management meeting (21 July 2021).
 - Investigation Report into allegations made by a former employee – Ms Anley advised that this work is on-going.
 - Board Appraisal forms – Ms Anley requested that the NEMs forward their completed forms to her prior to the submission date of 2 July 2021.

6. Chief Executive's Report

COVID-19

Mrs Jackson advised that the number of staff currently isolating due to illness or contact is very low and there remains no evidence of staff to staff or donor to staff/staff to donor transmission.

Platelet stocks are stable. However, the demand for red cells continues to be at higher levels than pre-Covid. Trusts advise that they are currently experiencing a significant increase in demand due to complex patients requiring transfusion. To increase supply, NIBTS has put in place additional sessions and other options are being explored to increase capacity. Mrs Jackson advised that all the other UK blood establishments have noted an increase in demand.

As previously reported, the Micro Lab remains on stand-by to support testing of COVID-19 swabs as required.

Pathology Transformation

The job description for the Programme Manager is currently being matched to determine the appropriate grade for the post and the Chief Executive has requested that this process be accelerated. The Blueprint policy document for the Minister is being updated to reflect the latest financial position. Ms Anley asked for the basis of the financial pressure. Mrs Jackson advised that all areas of DoH are experiencing financial pressure and as this is a new programme, it will require new funding.

Plasma for Fractionation (PFF)

DoH is considering the options for policy in this area. Mrs Jackson advised of a European Blood Alliance (EBA) workshop during the week beginning 21 June 2021 which she has highlighted to DoH.

For the Assessment of Individual Risk (FAIR) Project

A separate report is tabled during this Board meeting. However, the Chief Executive appraised the Board of media interest prior to World Donation Day (14 June 2021). There was discussion about the launch date. Mrs Jackson advised that the Minister of Health made an announcement on 14 December 2020 advising that FAIR would be launched and implemented during the summer months of 2021. The other UK blood establishments were able to implement this on with World Donation Day. NIBTS were not and has not deviated from the planned implementation during summer 2021.

Mrs Jackson further advised that the Minister donated blood on World Donation Day and also met with Mr John O'Doherty, Director of the Rainbow Project on the same day.

Mr Henderson advised that he had listened to the radio interview with the Chief Executive and felt it was very good. There was a discussion regarding the new questionnaire. Mrs Jackson advised that the questionnaire would follow a flow chart depending on responses to the questions. These questions would be asked to all donors. However, depending on responses, could require more detailed questions regarding sexual activity. Mrs Jackson advised that all blood collected would continue to be tested to the current standards.

NIBTS Facilities in the West

There has been no further update from WHSCT since May's Board meeting.

PULSE Replacement

The Project Board has a number of queries from DoH in respect of the outline business case for the Blood Production and Tracking solution, the responses to which have been returned.

Infected Blood Inquiry

Responses to the Rule 9 requests is on-going. An extension has been for one has been granted for the end of July 2021. A decision on extension for the other has yet to be received. Dates for NIBTS to give evidence have not been issued yet, but are likely to be during October 2021.

Mr Cathcart advised that he has been requested to give evidence during July 2021 as an individual and not as a NIBTS Board member.

Medical Director & Medical Staff Recruitment

Dr Andrea Piccin, Consultant in Transfusion Medicine, commenced in NIBTS mid-May 2021. On behalf of Board, Ms Anley welcomed Dr Piccin to NIBTS.

Head of HR & Corporate Services

NIBTS is supporting the phased return to work of the Head of HR & Corporate Services which is progressing.

Infrastructure Upgrade

As previously reported, NIBTS has been engaging with DoF Construction & Procurement Directorate (CPD) to explore options. Funding to support the preparation of a business case to develop options is being explored and the Chief Executive is taking forward.

Laboratory and Donor Services Manager

Mrs Geddis will retire from NIBTS at the end of August 2021. Mrs Jackson thanked Mrs Geddis not only for her service to NIBTS but also for her service and commitment to biomedical science in Northern Ireland with significant contributions to HSC. A process to recruit a replacement has commenced.

7. Audit Committee Update

Mr Cathcart – Chair of the Audit Committee appraised the Board of this morning's meeting.

- Mr Cathcart advised that Internal Audit are presently carrying out field work for audits.
- The Internal Charter was also tabled at the Committee, this document requires approval every two years. The Committee discussed and approved the Charter.
- The NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance was presented and discussed. The Comptroller & Auditor General will certify the 2020/21 financial statements with a qualified audit opinion due to the limitation of scope arising from the inability of audit to attend 2019/20-year end stock count.
- An Uncorrected Misstatement of £37k has been identified relating to holiday pay accrual. The Committee discussed, taking account of the recommendations from the auditors and management. The Committee endorsed the uncorrected position.
- The Charitable Trust Fund account had no qualifications.

Following on from the recent Board Effectiveness audit, Ms Anley would like previous Audit Committee minutes tabled at Board meetings. Mrs Jackson advised that the recommendations from that audit were accepted by management, however, would be required to be ratified by Board. Board discussed and felt that although minutes of previous Audit Committee meetings would be outdated, ratified the recommendation.

8. Finance Report

Mr Bell presented the report and advised that NIBTS had now received confirmation of inflation funding for 2021/22 and budgets will be adjusted accordingly. In addition, there are cost pressures arising from Covid mitigations and implementation of FAIR. NIBTS is engaging with HSCB to secure appropriate funding.

Revenue

The cumulative revenue position for the 2 months ended 31 May 2021 showed a net deficit of £89k. Excluding haemophilia, the deficit was £24k. The Pay position shows a

surplus of £10k. This is the net effect of overspends in Donor Services and Admin being offset by underspends in Laboratory and Medical departments. The Non-Pay position shows a deficit of £42k, primarily due to an overspend in transport arising from bus hire required for staff travel ensuring social distancing.

Capital

A Capital Resource Limit (CRL) for 2021/22 has yet to be agreed with DoH. Mr Bell advised that the potential capital expenditure is £145k.

Prompt Payment Policy

Compliance with Prompt Payment Policy for 2 months to 31 May 2021 was 98.4%.

Monitoring

In overall terms, the notional value of blood components issued to hospitals is 3.5% below the Service Level Agreement (SLA) value at the end of May 2021. Trusts are showing activity levels of 7% above - 16% below SLA. The position will be kept under review and adjustments agreed with each Trust.

9. Annual Report & Accounts

Mr Bell presented the Annual Report & Accounts and noted as per request from May's Board meeting, a draft report had been circulated to Board members. Mr Bell further advised that there was no material change to the report that was previously circulated. DoH may issue further wording for inclusion. The NIBTS Audit Committee are happy to endorse approval subject to no material change.

Ms Anley noted the Whistleblowing section in the Annual Report and sought clarification. Mrs Jackson advised that Whistleblowing was covered by the Governance & Risk Management Committee and no cases meeting the criteria for Whistleblowing had been identified. Mrs Jackson further advised that she was content with that paragraph in the Annual Report.

Board further discussed and approved the Annual Report and Accounts.

10. Trust Fund Annual Report

Mr Bell presented the report and advised that it was similar in layout and content as in previous years. There was an unqualified opinion, without modification expressed by auditors during the Audit Committee. The Board discussed and approved.

Mr Bell noted that electronic signatures were permissible again this year in Annual Reports. Both Ms Anley and Mrs Jackson agreed that their electronic signatures could be used.

11. Quality Management System Report

Ms Macauley presented the report.

Documents

Targets relating to SOP documents continue to remain slightly above the target KPI of 4%. A small decrease in the numbers outside review were noted during April 2021. The impacted documents range across all departments with the exception of Finance & IM&T. The target breach was discussed at QIR and Heads of Departments have been requested to address the SOPs overdue. Ms Macauley advised that the number of policy documents outside their review date has increased slightly moving the figure above the set target.

Incidents

The amended system for incident management was introduced during January 2021. Ms Macauley noted that initial analysis shows continuous improvement with regard to compliance with the KPI for investigations. There was a decrease in compliance during March 2021, however, this decrease has been corrected with the KPI target being achieved during April 2021. The percentage compliance for completion of corrective and preventative actions continues to be satisfactory.

Changes

The number of changes past their target date decreased during April 2021 addressing the upward trend noted in the first quarter. A number of changes were classified as Red or Amber. Ms Macauley appraised the Board of these changes and advised of a more formal process for slippage. Ms Macauley further advised of a review of the metrics and risks which will be brought to the next Governance & Risk Management Committee on 21 July 2021.

Audits

The audit schedule for 2021 has been agreed and auditors assigned. All audits that were scheduled for January – April 2021 have been completed with no major findings identified.

External Audits

As previously reported, NIBTS have submitted the evidence required to clear the findings of the recent UKAS inspection. The Lead Inspector has indicated that UKAS are content to clear the findings on the basis of evidence submitted and will recommend maintenance of accreditation. However, NIBTS await written confirmation on this.

Ms Macauley advised that there has been no communication from MHRA, but it is unlikely that the inspection will take place in July 2021 and awaits further information from MHRA.

Component Quality

Again, as previously reported, NIBTS have been experiencing difficulties in meeting the target parameters regarding the number of platelets in pooled platelets. NIBTS continue to work with internal stakeholders and the supplier to find a solution. Ms Macauley outlined any associated risks and assured Board that all product issued has met regulations.

Ms Anley advised that Mrs Lindsay's last meeting as Chair of the Governance & Risk Management Committee will be October 2021 and would like Ms Macauley to provide induction to the incoming Chair.

12. FAIR

Mrs Geddis presented the paper which was for information. FAIR had previously been discussed under the Chief Executive's Report. However, Mrs Geddis advised that a Nurse Training Lead has been appointed, training materials have been received and the Medical Team has agreed the new questions. Ms Anley enquired if donors will be consulted on the questions. Mrs Jackson advised that consultations have already concluded and agreed nationally with all stakeholders, including LGBTQ+ groups. However, NIBTS will be communicating with donors in the coming weeks. Mrs Geddis further advised on how the questions will run and, depending on responses, some of the more personal questions may not be asked.

13. Automated Serology Business Case – Replacement Cell Washers

Mrs Geddis presented the business case for approval. The Automated Serology department of NIBTS is responsible for all serology testing of antenatal patient samples throughout Northern Ireland. The cell washers are now over 18 years old and are exhibiting age related repairs. There is a critical need to obtain three replacement cell washers capable of holding 24 assay tubes otherwise NIBTS service provision may be compromised. The Board discussed and Mrs Geddis responded to all queries. The Board approved the business case.

Ms Anley on behalf of Board wished Mrs Geddis a happy retirement. Mrs Geddis advised that she has thoroughly enjoyed her time in NIBTS and working with SMT and collectively the organisation is in a much better place.

14. High Resolution HLA typing of Volunteer Stem Cell Donors: use of Charitable Funds

Dr Murdock presented the case for the use of Charitable Funds and advised that this initiative had been previously been mooted in 2016. Currently donors are low-medium resolution tissue typed leading to requests for additional blood samples for extended typing. Dr Murdock advised Board of the current unit price for low-medium resolution testing and highlighted that currently the price for high resolution testing is actually marginally less. Dr Murdock advised that this would be a one-year project and donors would be selected from the current donation panel. Mr Bell advised that any expenditure from the Charitable Funds require approval from Board as it acts as corporate trustee of this fund and the funds are available for the purposes in which they were intended. Ms Anley enquired how would Board evaluate the use funding and was advised that this would be evidenced by the inclusion on relevant registers.

Board discussed and agreed that this project is a valuable use of funds and approved.

15. Charitable Trust Fund Plan

Dr Murdock presented the plan which was collated during 2016/17 and was for information purposes to show where the monies are invested and the proposed use of same in 2016/17.

16. Corporate Plan

The Chief Executive advised that the Corporate Plan had previously been circulated to all Board members via email and the final version is being tabled today. Mrs Jackson further advised that the Plan would remain extant for four years. The Board discussed and approved.

17. Business Plan

The Chief Executive advised that following the workshop to discuss and agree, previous draft versions had been circulated and agreed by Board members. The final version is tabled for approval. Mrs Jackson further advised that communications have been received from DoH advising it was permissible to roll forward last years, however, work has been completed on 2021/22 Plan. The Board further discussed and agreed the 2021/22 Business Plan.

18. Key Performance Indicators

Mrs Jackson presented the report in its new format. Ms Anley enquired if the KPI report was still scheduled to be tabled at the forthcoming Governance & Risk Management meeting. Mrs Jackson advised it was, including a proposal for Quality metrics. Board discussed the metrics and Mrs Jackson advised of May's metrics for Staff Absence and SDRs which were not available at the time of circulation. Mrs Geddis advised that the staff absences were mainly in her Departments and further advised that all staff, currently on sick leave have been referred to Occupational Health. Mrs Geddis also advised that the May figure (also unavailable at time of circulation) for Active Donor Base (platelets) was 760 which was within target.

19. Any Other Business

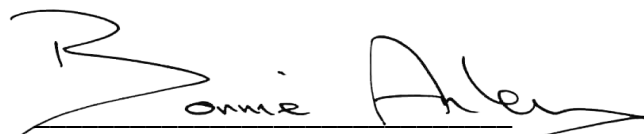
Mr Bell provided an update on cyber security matters and advised that NIBTS continues to participate in regional initiatives.

Ms Anley felt that Board members should be included in e-learning for Cyber Security and that plans should be put in place for new NEMs to have appropriate equipment, access and training when they commence later in the year.

20. Action List

Action	Responsible Person
Review & resend sections of the Board Self-Assessment form previously completed to Ms Anley	Mrs Jackson
Complete the Board Self-Assessment document by 14 October 2021	Ms Anley
Table previous Audit Committee minutes at Board	Mrs Carabine

**Date of next meeting: 9 September 2021, 11.30am
via video conferencing**

Signed: 
Dated: 9 September 2021