

Item 1.vii

Report to:	Board of Directors	Date: 5 March 2026
Report from:	Eilish Midlane, Chief Executive	
Principal Objective/ Strategy and Title	Chief Executive report	
Board Assurance Framework Entries	Governance	
Regulatory Requirement	N/A	
Equality Considerations	None believed to apply	
Key Risks	N/A	
For:	Information	

Purpose

This report provides the Trust Board with a bi-monthly update from the Chief Executive.

Introduction

Since becoming Chief Executive here at Royal Papworth I have been acutely aware and appreciative of the experience, maturity and professionalism of our Executive team. This month we said goodbye to a valued colleague, Oonagh Monkhouse as Director of Workforce and Organisational Development, as she continues her career journey at NHS Employers.

Oonagh has been an exceptional leader and colleague over the past eight years championing our cultural transformation journey and supporting colleagues in areas beyond her own portfolio and I am sure I speak for all of the Board when I say that she will be greatly missed. We will be joined by Marcus Riddell as our new Chief People Officer in early June and I am delighted that Lorraine Howard-Jones has agreed to cover in the meantime.



Focusing on clinical excellence in our services

Surgical site infections (wound infections)

Our SSI inpatient and readmission rate for quarter 3 (October to December 2025) was 4.2%, for coronary artery bypass graft surgery. This continues a steady reduction from 5.5% in Q2 and 6.1% in Q1 before that. However, it remains above the UKHSA benchmark rate of 2.8%, and so our improvement work and focus on this issue continues.

For heart valve surgery, the Q3 2025/26 data for inpatients and readmissions is 2.8%. This is an increase from 1.7% in Q2. Before that, in Q1, it was 3.6%.

Dr Hannah Kiziltug, Consultant Anaesthetist, continues to lead the SSI Stakeholder Group, with the next meeting planned for March 2026. The SSI dashboard is in development with the aim to incorporate ventilation, footfall, decontamination of surgical instruments and dress code. The environment particularly on the surgical fifth floor continues to be a key focus.

Elective care recovery

We continue to make strong progress on one of our three main priorities for 2025/26 – reducing waiting times for planned care for our patients.

Our referral to treatment (RTT) performance for January was at 75.5%, representing another month of continued improvement.

This means more than 75 out of 100 patients get their care in under 18 weeks as of January.

As a reminder, back in February 2025, only 61.8% of our patients as a total of our waiting list were waiting fewer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment.

Thanks to the hard work and innovation of our teams, that's a significant increase of 13.7 percentage points in just 11 months.

We have also seen a marked reduction in our total waiting list. In January 2026, 5,335 people were on our waiting list, down from 7,394 in Feb 2025. That's a decrease of 2,059 people, a 23% reduction on our backlog since the start of the elective care recovery programme.

Cancer

Another of our three priorities for the year is to improve our cancer performance and we have again seen another month of progress.

The national target is that, by March 2026, 75% of people with cancer should begin treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral. Our own target goes beyond that, to reach 80%. We are getting closer, with our 62-day performance for January at 73%. This is the fourth consecutive month of improvement following the launch of our cancer improvement programme in August. Back in April, we were at just 39%.

Meanwhile, our 31-day performance (that people should begin their cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat) was at 100%.

All of this represents a sizable improvement in our pathway and demonstrates grip and consistency from our lung cancer teams. We have been contacted by the national team to inform us that we are the best year-on-year improved NHS Trust in England and our performance in the lung cancer pathway is now second best in England across all Trusts who deliver this service.



Creating a culture of innovation, team working and learning

Innovation Fund Showcase

Our research and development team held their first ever Innovation Fund Showcase celebration in February. I was delighted to open the event and see so many people across all professional disciplines and backgrounds in the room in the HLRI.

The Innovation Fund is a collaboration with Royal Papworth Charity, and allows us to put resources directly into the hands of our people to deliver staff-led innovation.

The event included several poster presentations and four speeches from people who have been successfully awarded Innovation Fund grants in the past.

Since launching in 2021, the fund has awarded £720,000 across 21 projects - direct investment in our people and their ideas. We've also seen a marked change in the diversity of staff applying, moving away from just consultants to consultants, nurses, AHPs, healthcare scientists and even non-clinical staff.

It was an inspiring celebration of innovation in the Trust.



Partnering locally and regionally to extend our impact

Cambridge Festival

We are once again putting on an Open Day as part of the Cambridge Festival, on Sunday 22 March. This is one of the key engagement events we have in our calendar.

The Cambridge Festival, co-ordinated by the University of Cambridge, is a mixture of online, on-demand and in-person events covering all aspects of the world-leading research happening at Cambridge.

We will be opening the atrium to friends and family of our staff as well as the general public and the communities we treat, with 14 teams signed up to showcase the clinical care,

research, equipment and expertise needed to transform what is possible for patients with heart and lung conditions.

All 580 tickets were booked very quickly. We look forward to welcoming people through the doors.



Leading nationally and internationally in heart and lung care

NHSBT ARC pilot

We recently launched the NHS Blood and Transplant's new Assessment and Recovery Centre (ARC) at Royal Papworth Hospital, becoming the first hospital in the UK to establish an ARC for lung transplants.

The ARCs programme is an ambitious national initiative to increase the number of organs suitable for transplant.

NHSBT is opening ARCs across the country where selected donated organs will be assessed and treated at regional perfusion hubs.

At Royal Papworth, we'll see donated lungs which are considered difficult to assess or borderline for transplant brought here, where our teams will use a technique called ex-vivo lung perfusion (EVLP), which we've been using here since 2024. This reconditions the lungs outside the body in a special machine and improves their quality to make them suitable for donation, either for transplant patients here or at another UK transplant centre.

If the pilot is successful and a UK-wide network of these centres is eventually established, NHSBT predicts it will enable up to 750 extra lifesaving and life-improving transplants every year.

This will be a major new service delivered by our teams to improve the UK provision of organs for donation.

Accelerating heart transplant research

Royal Papworth Charity has received its largest donation from an individual in its 30-year history – a gift of £453,611, generously provided by British-born philanthropist Wendy J. Tomlin-Hess.

This extraordinary act of philanthropy from Wendy, who now lives in the United States, will accelerate groundbreaking research and innovation in heart transplantation here at Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.



Ensuring all staff feel valued and empowered

Staff Survey

We are getting ready for the publication of the 2025 NHS Staff Survey results, which are due to be published at 09:30 on Thursday 12 March.

Heads of departments will be given access to the data for their teams and we will be holding all-staff briefing sessions to go through the results, explaining what the numbers tell us and what we need to focus on in the year ahead to make working here an enjoyable experience for all of our people.

Reasons to be proud

A treatment that targets the immune system could help stop repeat heart attacks in people who have recently had one, according to the results of an early-stage clinical trial run in Cambridge.

Two years after joining the trial, none of the participants that received treatment had further heart attacks.

Sixty patients who had recently had heart attacks took part in IVORY, the majority recruited in our hospital. Each was either given a low dose of aldesleukin or a placebo. Of these, 55 patients then participated in up to five years of follow-up health monitoring, known as IVORY-FINALE.

Results published in early January in Nature Medicine indicate that low-dose treatment with aldesleukin could prevent repeat heart attacks by reducing inflammation.

Well done to all of our teams involved in this research.