United Kingdom Transfusion Laboratory Collaborative (UKTLC)
Minutes of a meeting held on 15 May 2019
at 12 Coldbath Square, London, EC1R SHL

Present:
Rashmi Rook (RR) (Chair)
Debbie Asher (DA) (Eastern Pathology Alliance/ TLM)
Sinead Carty (SC) (NHS Northern Ireland)
Mike Dawe (MD) (MHRA - Guest)
Andy Miles (AM) (MOD - Guest)
Hema Mistry (HM) (SHOT)
Malcom Needs (MN) (IBMS - Transfusion Science Chief Examiner)
Chris Robbie (CR) (MHRA)
Megan Rowley (MR) (Scotland - via phone)
Julie Staves (JS) (BBTS/ CMO NBTC)
Caroline Subramaniam (CS) (UKAS)
Tracy Tomlison (TT) (NHSBT – RCI)
Anne Thomson (NHS National Services Scotland)
Lorna Toward (LT) (Senior BMS- SASH Guest)
Dan Willis (Centre of Defence Pathology)
Claire Whitham (CWh) (UKNEQAS)
Lee Wong (LW) (NHS Wales - via phone)
Chris Ward (CW) (IBMS, Head of Examinations)

1. Introductions/ Apologies
RR welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from:
Anna Capps-Jenner (AC) (CCMO’s NBTC)
Paula Bolton-Maggs (PBM) (RCPath)
Dan Willis was introduced and during this meeting it was agreed that MOD inclusion and input on this group would be helpful.
Mike Dawe was invited to this meeting to discuss the ‘culture survey’ and general ideas.
Lorna Toward was invited as a Senior BMS guest and will be presenting UKTLC training requirements at IBMS congress.

2. Actions from last meeting held on 1 November 2018

TLC Survey – Article for Transfusion Medicine
The article ‘Staffing in hospital transfusion laboratories: UKTLC surveys show cause for concern’ which has been published in Transfusion Medicine was circulated with the papers for the meeting.

Technical Lead
Following the responses to the survey it was apparent that there was not the confusion over the term Technical Lead that had been expressed at the last meeting so the action was closed.

Capacity Planning
RR thanked those who had already sent her examples of their capacity plans but requested that other members of the UKTLC do the same or post these directly on to the blood Forum.
Update to Standards
RR informed that the work on updating the UKTLC standards had yet to be completed. Members recognised that Richard Haggas (NEQAS) was also working on the BSH compatibility standards and that there needed to be some co-ordination of this work so that the two documents are complementing each other. RR to liaise with CWh.

3. UKTLC Survey 2019 Findings
HM explained that the UKTLC 2019 Survey was sent out to 304 laboratories on Tuesday 2nd April 2019 with an extended deadline for responses of Friday 26th April. HM presented the key initial findings of the survey to the group. UKTLC members were asked to review the draft document and send any comments to HM by Friday 24th May. This is not to be circulated yet.

UKTLC members commented that there was a need to review the questions ahead of the 2021 survey and that consideration should be given on other ways of collecting the data. It was agreed that this would be an agenda item for a future meeting of this group.

The review of the findings led to a discussion on some of the current key issues within transfusion. DA stated that given the pathology network consolidation that is currently happening that it was vital that NHSi took on board the lessons that have been learnt from networks that have failed.

Members expressed an interest in seeing the outcomes of the work of Transfusion 2024, the recommendations that come of this and how these are aligned with the work of the MHRA and UKAS. [https://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/news/nhs-blood-and-transplant-hosts-conference-to-set-blood-transfusion-priorities/](https://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/news/nhs-blood-and-transplant-hosts-conference-to-set-blood-transfusion-priorities/)

MD commented that some of the capacity plans that he had seen were not, in his opinion, fit for purpose as they did not accurately reflect the business that needed to be carried out. DA stated that she had a capacity plan but that staffing remained a major issue. DA stated she was not at establishment level and had not been for some time as she was struggling to find suitable staff to fill the roles.

MD queried how information from the Blood Consultative Committee was disseminated, whether it representatives from across the different regions and if the right people were coming to their meetings.

Northern Ireland
SC outlined the current status of the pathology modernisation program within Northern Ireland and explained that there five trusts with a total of ten laboratories. She explained that there are regular joint meetings with representatives from the different laboratories and that like elsewhere in the UK that there are issues around filling certain posts.

Wales
LW outlined the Welsh is encouraging laboratories to ‘grow’ their own staff to fill the gaps that exist. She explained that there are quarterly national meetings to discuss the issues and commented that
the National Oversight Group that was looking at how to roll-out the recent SHOT recommendations.

**Scotland**

MR explained the work of the laboratory managers group was under review and that a new group has been set up – Haematology and Transfusion Scotland (HATS) although it is yet to meet. MR informed that relevant documents are circulated to laboratories through the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS). (See also item five)

4. **Culture Survey Findings and MHRA Feedback**

MD informed the meeting that the MHRA had surveyed people to back up the anecdotal evidence that staff were being disciplined as a result of making an MHRA Serious Adverse Blood Reactions and Events (SABRE) report. The survey had 98 respondents. In the survey respondents had stated that they:

- felt pressurised to change reports,
- were told that not all incidents require a root cause analysis
- were aware of staff being threatened with disciplinary action for making reports
- suggested changes to practice in order to improve the service but had been ignored
- were concerned about the pressures on staffing caused by long term sickness, vacancies and people considering leaving the profession.

MD stated that it was accepted that in some cases it might be appropriate for staff to face disciplinary action if an incident took place but that some of the findings from this survey were concerning and that therefore, whilst recognising the sample size was relatively small, that the outcomes and recommendations of this work would be sent to the Department of Health for a response.

CWh commented that in many laboratories people were fully on board with the EQA process but that in others there was collusion with samples being run multiple times and then a consensus report being submitted. This is obviously is not the point of an EQA system.

CR stated as part of the inspections that it is important that the issues around staffing are admitted and the impact that this may have/does have on the issues, reports and incidents that are recorded. He added that the quality of reports received varied and that whilst there had been some improvements with some honest and open reporting in others the level of scrutiny was poor with issues of potential harm to patients not being properly investigated.

5. **Sustainability and Transformation Model – Scotland**

AT presented to the group on ‘Sustainability in Hospital Transfusion Laboratories’. Ideas to be discussed on laboratory-self assessment and oversight by the Blood Service to identify high-risk sites to prioritise help.

RR to discuss with NBTC

6. **NEQAS Feedback**

CWh indicated Jenny is leaving UKNEQAS and that a new Director is in the process of being appointed.

She indicated the NEQAS exercises that had been undertaken recently. (19E1/E3 on antibody screen/identification and 19R2 on ABO/RhD grouping, antibody screen/identification crossmatch and red cell phenotyping). For 19E1 CW commented that there were issues with one manufacturer and they had been encouraged to do a ‘Yellow Card’ report.
7. **RCI Laboratories**

TT indicated that more and more samples are being sent to reference laboratories that really should not be with routine work up 26% and on-call work up 36% in the last five years and that this was having a knock-on effect on the workload in these labs. In order to attempt to resolve this RCI labs are planning to train staff in laboratories so that they can undertake investigations up to a certain point so that less regular work is sent to RCI however there are questions over how this work will be funded and the sustainability of doing this.

TT also commented that they are also experiencing issues in recruiting suitably qualified staff with the same Band 7 post being advertised multiple times without success.

8. **SHOT**

Shruthi Narayan (SN) is the new Medical Director at SHOT. She commented that this was last meeting for HM as she was taking up a new post. Members of UKLTC thanked HM for her contributions to the work of the group. The replacement for HM will start work in August and it is expected that SHOT will have a full complement of staff from October or November.


9. **RCPath**

PBM provided the following update for the inclusion in the minutes;

- PBM has volunteered to integrate the survey findings into an update.
- The Transfusion 2024 conference was very useful in ensuring that the staffing issues were drawn to the attention of Sue Hill.
- PBM is now part of a subgroup for the pathology optimisation programme looking at specialist tests. There is also a transfusion committee which has strong laboratory representation. RCPath Council have noted that lessons must be learned from unsuccessful networks and the importance of IT in supporting the networks.
- There continues to be concern with haematology registrar training in transfusion which are being discussed by the Transfusion Medicine SAC
- The intercollegiate committee on haematology are preparing for a meeting on 17th December to be held at the RCPath. Topics will include the outputs from the current BSH and RCPath Staffing Surveys, Getting it Right First Time (GIRFT) and genomics. PBM will be talking on transfusion now and in the future and will use the opportunity to ensure laboratory staffing is included.

10. **UKAS**

CS confirmed to an earlier question that UKAS would very much like to remain a participating member of UKLTC.

CS provided the following update for inclusion in the minutes:

Following the triggering of Article 50 on March 29, 2017, UKAS has been working to ensure that those within Government dealing with Brexit are aware of the importance of accreditation to the national economy, and also to trade with the EU and internationally. Regular meetings are being
held with Ministers and officials in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for Exiting the EU (DExEU) and the Department for International Trade (DIT). Following consultation with customers and stakeholders, the key messages being communicated to Government include:

- Regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, it is vitally important for UK business that UKAS’ recognition as the UK National Accreditation Body continues.
- Maintaining European and international recognition through continuing membership of EA, ILAC and IAF is extremely important for UKAS, for UKAS’ customers and for users of accredited services.
- Continued access to notified bodies, or other mutually recognised bodies, will be important for UK businesses.
- If new trade agreements are required between the UK and the EU, consideration will need to be given to how any required testing or inspection is carried out and how the competence of the organisations is assessed. Accreditation is likely to be required for this purpose.
- It will be essential for UK industry that accreditation is given due recognition in any new international trade agreements that emerge.

UKAS has prepared the following leaflet outlining the implications of Brexit for accreditation and conformity assessment and setting out these key objectives. Information on this can be found here: https://www.ukas.com/news/brexit-status-of-ukas-accreditation/

UKAS Post assessment survey
A UKAS Post Assessment Assessor Survey has been introduced to gather feedback from customers on the performance of individuals within their assessment teams. The survey prompts respondents to assign a 1-5 performance rating for each assessor in relation to the following aspects: - Professionalism, Competence & Knowledge, Time Management, Consistency, Clarity, Communication and Preparation.

11. 2019 - 2022 Aims of the UKTLC
It was agreed that the profile of the UKTLC needs to be raised so that it is seen as a point of influence within Transfusion but it was queried how this could be achieved. We agreed the focus of UKTLC is:

- recommending best practice/ core skills and influence policies
- making standards fit for purpose and promoting this
- giving the laboratories guidance and direction
- monitoring

There was a group discussion on what the current main issues are, what training needs exit and how can this be delivered and how to improve communication within the TLM community.

Key actions:
DW will review the slide that shows the organisations that are part of the UKTLC to include MOD logo to see how it can be improved.

Claire will design a logo for UKTLC.

RR to:
- Send amended Terms of Reference that provide more details on the roles and responsibilities of each organisation within the UKTLC
- Send out draft updated UKTLC Standards by end June for review.
- Will ask NBTC a request for a TLM email list
Email NTLM group with decisions from this meeting, and forward to Sinead, Anne and Lee, so they can inform TLMs in their respective countries too. Megan will talk to contacts at JPAC regarding an area for UKTLC documents etc.

Once the standards have been revised, we will begin to produce a minimum quarterly UKTLC newsletter that we will all contribute to that shares best practice and knowledge as well as highlighting other key issues in transfusion. It was recognised that there would be issues around GDPR in developing and maintain such a distribution list and therefore a.

Shruthi/ SHOT team will format the newsletter.
Anne and Shruthi- to look at Learnpro to see what other modules might be useful to have.
Members to send RR details of possible other TLMs to join the UKTLC.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the UKTLC will take place in autumn 2019.