

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

Infected Blood

Compensation Authority

IBCA Board - Minutes and Actions
07 April 2025, 16:00 - 17:00
10 Victoria Street

Board Members:

1. Sir Robert Francis (SRF) - Interim Chair
2. David Foley (DF) - Interim CEO
3. Russell Frith - Chair of Audit & Risk Committee - Non Executive Director
4. Deborah Harris-Ugbomah - Non-Executive Director
5. Paula Sussex - Non-Executive Director
6. Gillian Fairfield - Non Executive Director
7. Helen Parker - Non-Executive Director
8. Sir Rob Behrens - Non-Executive Director
9. Richard Hornby - Interim Finance Director
10. Celine McLoughlin - Interim Director of Digital
11. Sindy Skeldon - Interim Director of Operations

Attendees:

1. Catherine Webster - IBCA Chief of Staff
2. GRO-D - Board Secretariat
3. GRO-D - Private Secretary to Sir Robert
4. John Kelly - Interim Director of Data
5. Rachel Forster - Interim Director Communications
6. Shainila Pradhan - Programme Director
7. Gill Nicholson - Interim HR Director
8. GRO-D - Board Secretariat

Apologies: None

1. Welcome

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the emergency Board meeting following a meeting with the Minister and Permanent Secretary on 1st April.

2. Chair and CEO Update on Meeting with Minister for the Cabinet Office and Principal Accounting Officer

- 2.1. The Board was informed of the Minister's concerns at the pace of IBCA's delivery and wanted proposals and ideas of how to speed things up. The Minister wanted to see a significant increase in the number of claims processed for the registered infected cohort by June with numbers in the 1000's rather than the 100's. He also wanted all of the registered infected cohort to receive their compensation payments by the end of 2025.

- 2.2. The IBCA Test and Learn approach and the plans to significantly scale up by the end of the year had been explained to the Minister and he had requested a set of options around scaling up operations more quickly.
- 2.3. The Board noted that IBCA's Chair and CEO had made clear that making changes in priorities and taking on more risk would require a clear written acceptance of any risks as well as practical support from the Cabinet Office and other government partners.
- 2.4. The Board noted that the Minister had been called to give evidence at the Public Inquiry on May 7th and the Chair and CEO had been called to give evidence on May 8th.
- 2.5. The Board were asked to give a steer on their appetite for the Ministerial proposal to prioritise the Living Registered Infected cohort and deferring other categories, and to share their views on whether they considered this fair and proportionate.
- 2.6. The Board was asked to consider whether there were things that could be done or should be done to speed up delivery and would their view change if there was a genuine relaxation of the obligation to protect public money and take more risk.

3. Acceleration of Scale Up Options

- 3.1. An overview of IBCA's delivery progress and approach was given along with key milestones achieved to date. The Board heard that despite progress made the community had expressed their views for faster payments. IBCA's approach to date had been informed by user research which had highlighted that speed was important but not at any cost. IBCA had acknowledged the complexity of the people that it was serving and the user centred design recognised that a one size fits all approach would not work best.
- 3.2. The Board heard that IBCA's Executive Committee and other IBCA colleagues had met on 3 April for a full day workshop to consider all options to meet this ask and to assess all options in terms of: the scale of opportunity for acceleration they offered; the practical requirements which would need to be put in place by IBCA, the Cabinet Office and other partners; and the risks created or increased by each option.
- 3.3. The Board was presented with a draft submission to the Minister that set out some options for IBCA to significantly increase the volume of payments being made along with the associated risks in doing so. These included:
 - opportunities to increase both the number of staff processing claims and to improve recruitment of resource required to support claims processing in data and digital specialisms
 - opportunities to improve the efficiency of IBCA's processing of registered infected claims
 - opportunities to outsource elements of IBCA's work by funding partners
 - ways to speed up approvals processes to support the delivery of these options

- work that IBCA could stop doing in order to focus on the processing of claims for the registered infected
- 3.4. By implementing the proposed options, the estimated increase in claims processed would be 532 by the end of June and 5000 by December. This would cover all of the Registered living infected and some additional claims from another cohort.
- 3.5. The Board noted that one of the consequences of stopping work to focus on the processing of claims for the registered infected would be that no development work would take place for other cohorts, potentially creating a gap in service delivery.
- 3.6. For IBCA to respond to the Minister, the Board were asked to give a general steer on their appetite to defer work on other cohorts to focus on the registered living infected for swifter resolution.

Board Discussion:

- 3.7. The Board had a robust discussion and shared their views on the proposed options included in the draft submission.
- 3.8. There was Board appetite and support for taking on additional risk particularly if this was underwritten. The Board agreed that any actions leading to an increase in fraud risk could lead to NAO qualifying the IBCA accounts which was **not** preferred. However greater commercial freedom would be welcome as long as it was in writing.
- 3.9. A question was raised around what was driving the Minister's request and would IBCA be asked again to pivot on priorities again if further negative publicity occurred in the future. The Board felt that IBCA's independence needed to be protected and the organisation should stand strong.
- 3.10. The Board advised taking some legal advice on whether a Ministerial direction was needed and whether the authority was there to grant leeway.
- 3.11. The Board also noted that delays would have an impact on the affected claimants who would lose their claims after they die.
- 3.12. The Board noted a preference for continuing with as much development as possible and suggested presenting this as an additional cost to the Minister. It was noted that to stop development would risk staff being employed with no work.
- 3.13. The Board advised setting out the Executive preferences to the Minister and not to take actions where control risk was being lost.
- 3.14. The Board discussed staffing in detail and agreed that any lowering of the bar on recruitment would need to be managed carefully with no compromise on staff security and the quality of training needed to be maintained.
- 3.15. Suggestions were made to:
- Ask for waivers on salary but taking care not to create 2 tiers with premium rates for certain staff.

- Consider recruitment in other locations across the country to increase staffing
- Work with charities to triage claims

Summary

3.16. The Chair summarised key points from the discussion:

- IBCA needed to stand up for independence as a body
- IBCA should challenge itself - can we do better
- Difficult to accept any deprioritisation of other cohorts
- A reduction in bureaucracy could support the acceleration of Cabinet Office processes
- Need to keep control
- Any partnerships should not upset a level playing field for claimants
- Don't lower standards in recruiting staff
- Broaden geographical location of staff
- Get a cast iron guarantee on any reduction in risk.

3.17. A suggestion was made to reach out to KPMG who have been working with organisations who have applied accelerators to compare with what IBCA has been doing.

ACTION: Write a note to Board members on getting an independent perspective on IBCA's approach - David Foley

- 3.18. Executive members suggested that the proposal was an opportunity to ask for freedoms and in return should demonstrate what IBCA could do locally to improve its offer.
- 3.19. It was suggested that IBCA could use the additional capacity to look at the unregistered affected cohort by the end of the year which is not in the current plans.
- 3.20. There was also the potential to include accelerators in the proposal and explore a pre registration system to address concerns over members of the community who had not felt recognised. Although it was acknowledged that expectations that claims would be dealt with faster would need to be managed.

Next Steps

- 3.21. The Executive agreed to develop the proposals in line with the clear steer that the Board had given. The proposal would be submitted to Ministers this week.
- 3.22. The overall plan would be to increase claims significantly by the end of the year and complete in the region of 500 claims by the end of June. It was agreed that the Chair would sign off the proposal.
- 3.23. Arrange a meeting with the Minister to discuss the proposal and to ascertain what he could do to help with a clear ask for him to take on Ministerial risk.

- 3.24. Come back to the Board for a decision(s) based on the outcome of discussions from Ministers.
- 3.25. The Board thanked IBCA Staff for all of their hard work to date.