

Sickle Cell Service Development within the East Midlands Using the MedTech Funding

The Spectra Optia technology was introduced onto the MedTech Funding Mandate (MTFM) policy from the 1st April 2022, it was selected as it met the predefined criteria: it was [recommended for use by NICE](#), could show it was effective, cost-saving (with cost savings within 3 years) and was affordable to the NHS.

The health innovation network technology lead (Health Innovation Yorkshire & Humber) carried out a 3-month review that found that patient access to automated red blood cell exchange was constrained by location and access to the existing machines, with many procedures limited to being within 'clinic opening hours' (9am-5pm). Outside these hours, sickle cell patients' access to automated red blood exchange can vary across providers with some only being able to access the less effective manual red blood cell exchange treatment through their local provider, however there are possible side effects such as 'iron overload' associated to this procedure. Using the vehicle of the MTFM, the Health Innovation Network saw an opportunity to improve equity of access to treatment by expanding service provision through recruitment of specialists.

What we did:



We engaged with those already involved in the care and management of sickle cell services. This included:

- Haemoglobinopathies Coordinating Centres (HCCs)
- Specialist Haemoglobinopathy Teams
- Trust's finance and contracting teams
- Regional specialist commissioning

We supported East Midlands' Sickle Cell teams to navigate the process where they reviewed their current provision, planned ambitious expansion of specialist services and developed business cases.

We worked with key stakeholders over two to three years to review, revise and pursue progress to achieve funding for the business cases.

Funding and the tariff:



East Midlands received a share of £9M investment from NHS England to expand the current service. The East Midlands team of stakeholders alongside their colleagues across England, also successfully negotiated a change in the ongoing tariff for the service to ensure the changes were sustainable in the longer term.

Also, in August 2023, NHS England Specialised Commissioning ear-marked capital funding for 25 automated red blood cell exchange machines (Spectra Optia) to support the MTFM.

Nottingham University Hospitals and the University Hospitals of Leicester submitted expressions of interest, and both were successful. 25 machines were distributed to 22 NHS trusts in March 2024.

Following a service review, East Midlands teams focussed on expanding services in existing specialist centres, which would better serve patients with urgent need.

RESOURCES:

- [No-one's Listening APPG report](#)
- [More details about the local project](#)
- [National news story](#)



3 years

of review, planning and business case preparation and revision



£777,779

funding to expand the East Midlands sickle cell service provision



2 new machines

for East Midlands – one of which will enable a new paediatric service in Nottingham