

# BLOOD BIKES SCOTLAND



**When Blood Bikes Scotland were asked to help with the urgent transport of medication from Birmingham to Dundee, they were part of a critical relay operation to save a life with a ground-breaking treatment.**

The cargo was an extraordinary medication consisting of donated human faeces, a life-saving treatment called a faecal microbiota transplant (FMT) which is used to tackle really serious cases of C-difficile. The assignment illustrates very well much of Blood Bikes Scotland's work - sometimes unglamorous, but absolutely essential.

Blood Bikes Scotland (BBS) is a voluntary organisation which supports the NHS by transporting, free of charge, blood and other test samples from wards to laboratories. They also deliver medication to patients' homes, and support GPs, District Nurses, care homes and community hospitals with transport of small, urgent items.

"Behind every journey made on the bikes, there's a patient – someone is waiting for a critical test result, medication, equipment or urgent medical notes," explains Phil Dodsworth, Trustee at Blood Bikes Scotland. And the many thousands of journeys not only save the NHS a significant amount of money, but mean the fast transport network is in place to help save lives,

as in the case of the FMT relay.

The bikes can get through traffic quickly – especially useful during rush hours – so they can get pathology samples to labs quickly, or urgent medication to patients who need it. Other items needing transport include surgical instruments and, believe it or not, physical files of patient notes or x-rays urgently needed by medics.

While speed is of the essence for much of their work, the biggest benefit is cost avoidance for the NHS. By being on-call to provide transport free of charge, BBS saves the NHS a significant amount of money that would otherwise be spent on their own vehicles and drivers, external courier services and taxis.

Blood Bikes Scotland cover the Lothians, Forth Valley, Borders, Fife and Tayside, where they have service level agreements in place with each of the NHS Boards. Sister organisations support NHS Boards elsewhere in Scotland and the UK, and they all work together in relays when necessary to cover long distances.

Whilst not blue-light vehicles, the incredible value of the service provided by blood bikes is formally recognised in that, like the emergency services, their vehicles are exempt from road tax.

Riders are out in all weather conditions. A fleet of 15 motorcycles is supplemented by five cars to transport larger equipment (although they have been known to strap a walking frame to the back of a motorcycle on one occasion when it was urgently needed!) The motorcycles are modified to allow larger loads to be carried, with panniers and a tray on most of them. The Nationwide Association of Blood Bikes (NABB) have recently negotiated with Yamaha to build custom, manufacturer-approved bikes so, like police bikes, they come from the factory ready to ride. The custom bikes are





➤ based on the Yamaha Tracer 9GT, and Blood Bikes Scotland will be progressively expanding their use. The fleet also includes one Zero electric motorbike suitable for short fast runs.

A team of 188 volunteer riders and controllers works 70 operational shifts per week across the five regions. BBS delivers its service 7 days a week, including public holidays, and in 2022/23 they received 7796 requests for transport and saved the NHS over a quarter of a million pounds – money that can be used directly for frontline services instead.

Volunteer riders, controllers and everyone involved provides the service completely free of charge. It's a fundamental principle of BBS Scotland since its inception that no-one takes a salary.

The monthly overhead for the charity of running the bikes 365 days a year (tyres, insurance, fuel, maintenance and repairs) is around £6000\*. **The service is entirely dependent on donations from the public, grant bodies and corporate sponsors;** they take nothing from the NHS or Scottish Government, so they are grateful for every single donation. You can raise money for Blood Bikes Scotland while shopping online, completely free of charge to you – see the sidebox for details.

Phil was once called on to take a teddy bear to a distraught little girl in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital who had left it behind and was unable to settle. Teddy promptly arrived by motorcycle (which was on its way anyway with other jobs for the hospital) to the great relief of the girl, her parents and the nurses. There are some things whose value you just can't measure.



## GIVE AS YOU LIVE – free and easy way to raise money

Shop with a huge number of retailers via Give as You Live, and a percentage of your purchase value is donated to BBS. Please see [www.giveasyoulive.com/join/bloodbikesscotland](http://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/bloodbikesscotland)

Direct donations are also welcome from the public and businesses. See ways to donate at [www.bloodbikesscotland.co.uk/donate](http://www.bloodbikesscotland.co.uk/donate)

## VOLUNTEER!

Volunteers are always welcome to join the current team of 188 volunteers covering the area including the Lothians, from Tayside and Fife to the Borders and as far west as Forth Valley. Riders need an advanced riding qualification.

Non-riding volunteers are also welcome; every shift needs a Controller, the point of contact between the NHS and the riders. Please contact BBS at the details below.



For more information see: [www.bloodbikesscotland.co.uk](http://www.bloodbikesscotland.co.uk)

Blood Bikes Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SC049314.

\* All figures relate to financial year 2022/2023