

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
POLICY GUIDANCE STATEMENT**



**Yes I donate**  
ORGAN DONATION

**PROMOTING HUMAN ORGAN DONATION AND  
TRANSPLANTATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

**11 December 2017**

# Promoting Human Organ Donation and Transplantation in Northern Ireland

## Policy Guidance Statement

### KEY FACTS ABOUT ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION

- One person's decision to donate their organs is a gift that can save and improve the lives of up to nine other people.<sup>1</sup>
- As well as saving the lives of people who are awaiting an urgent transplant, a donated organ can greatly improve the quality of life for patients suffering from chronic illness, and their families and carers, whilst also bringing great comfort to donors' families.
- The number of both living and deceased organ donors from Northern Ireland consistently compares favourably to that of other countries, reflecting generally positive attitudes towards organ donation in our society and the strong infrastructure that supports it and knowledge about organ donation amongst our people, the giving nature as a society, and the skill and compassion of our healthcare professionals.
- However, we know that more can be done. At present, around 200 people in Northern Ireland are on the transplant waiting list, and every year around 14 people in Northern Ireland die waiting for an organ transplant.
- We know that the majority of people living in Northern Ireland would accept a donated organ if they needed one, yet at present only 41% of us have signed the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR). In addition, only a small number of us will die in circumstances where organ donation is clinically possible. It is therefore important that when these circumstances do arise, the opportunity to help others is not lost.
- The health service can also benefit through the reduced cost of treating patients, whose health has been improved through this altruistic act, by releasing resources to provide treatments for patients suffering from other ill-health conditions.

## Introduction

The Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 Part 4 Human Transplantation Section 15 provides a duty to promote transplantation requiring that:

- (1) The Department must—
  - (a) promote transplantation, and
  - (b) provide information and increase awareness about transplantation and the donation for transplantation of parts of the human body.
- (2) The duty under subsection (1) includes in particular a duty to promote a campaign informing the public at least once a year.

The purpose of this statement is to provide guidance on the Department of Health's ("the Department" or "DoH") policy for implementing this statutory duty, that came into effect on [insert date].

## Strategic Context

The Department is a signatory to NHS Blood and Transplant's UK-wide strategy *Taking Organ Donation to 2020*<sup>1</sup>, which calls for a revolution in attitudes to consent to donation, and advocates a sustained and well-coordinated programme of communication activities to promote organ donation across all parts of the UK.

## Policy Aim

The Department's overall aim in implementing the new statutory duty is to build upon the principles of the strategy by promoting positive, cultural, long term change to 2020 and beyond, through an approach that is tailored to meet the needs of the Northern Ireland population. It is hoped that this will help to consistently secure authorisation to proceed with donation in 80% of potential cases; which in turn will consolidate and improve Northern Ireland's standing amongst the world's best performing regions and countries. In 2016/17, Northern Ireland had 22.7 deceased donors per million of population (pmp), and a world-leading 42.2 living donors pmp.

Achieving this lies firstly in encouraging people to want to become donors through increasing their knowledge about the process and about the benefits it can bring, and secondly in increasing the rate of consent to donation given by their next of kin in circumstances where donation is

## KEY FIGURES

- In Northern Ireland 770,000 people have signed the ODR (Sept 2017), accounting for 42% of the population. This has increased steadily from 30% in 2013 at the launch of the strategy *Taking Organ Donation to 2020*.
- In 2016/17, the consent rate for donation to proceed in Northern Ireland was 64%, compared to UK average of 63%. The 2020 Strategy target is 80%.
- In 2016/17, Northern Ireland had 22.7 deceased donors per million of its population (pmp), compared to the UK average of 21.6 pmp (making the UK the world's 12<sup>th</sup> leading nation). The five leading countries were: Spain (43.4pmp), Croatia, (38.6 pmp), Portugal (32.6 pmp), Belgium (31.6 pmp) and France (27.5 pmp).
- In 2016/17 Northern Ireland had 42.2 living donors pmp compared to the UK average of 16.1 pmp. The five leading countries were: Turkey (45.4 pmp), South Korea (38.4 pmp), Netherlands (33.9 pmp), Saudi Arabia (27.3 pmp) and Israel (27.0 pmp).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/to2020/>

possible. This is more likely to occur when our organ donation wishes are already known through prior discussion, and when families are given the opportunity to receive appropriate advice from healthcare professionals at this difficult time.

In 2016/17, almost four out of ten families, when faced with the decision, did not give their consent for donation to proceed, sometimes against the known wishes of the patient. Addressing the reasons for refusal in these difficult circumstances will help us consistently achieve the *Taking Organ Donation to 2020* strategy target of an 80% consent rate.

Following a detailed examination of all aspects of soft opt-out systems the NI Assembly decided in 2016 not to proceed with specific legislation to introduce a soft opt-out system as a possible means of increasing levels of organ donation in Northern Ireland. However, the Assembly in recognition of the importance of promoting organ donation, passed the legislation referred to in the opening paragraph, in The Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, which places a statutory duty on the Department to: promote transplantation; and, and increase awareness about transplantation and the donation of human organs.

The Department will therefore use this new statutory power to achieve higher rates of donation to be delivered throughout the consent journey under the current legal framework.

The Act also requires the Department to lay before the Assembly an annual report about transplantation in that year. The report must include every five years: the opinion of the Department as to whether this Act has been effective in promoting transplantation, and; any recommendations the Department considers appropriate for amending the law so as to further promote transplantation. This statutory provision therefore provides the Assembly to review the policy at appropriate intervals.

## **Key Underpinning Principle**

The Department is committed to working across the Health and Social Care (HSC) system, the public sector and wider society to promote organ donation in Northern Ireland through a coordinated, tailored and sustained approach to education and awareness, aimed at both members of the public and healthcare professionals. The role of the HSC organisations in delivering this is described below. Through this approach, we aspire to see more people benefit from this gift of life by striving to increase the number of organs available for transplantation.

## **Objectives and Key Commitments**

Reflecting international best practice, activities to promote organ donation by Health and Social Care (HSC) organisations in Northern Ireland will focus on **two primary objectives** to be implemented through **six key commitments** to drive increased rates of organ donation in Northern Ireland. These are listed below and explained in detail in the remainder of this document.

## **Objective 1: Encouraging positive actions and behaviours in relation to organ donation**

### Commitments 1-5

The Department commits to increasing awareness of organ donation and the rate of consent by families by:

1. Developing a long term HSC Communications Programme;
2. Providing ring-fenced funding to coordinate and deliver communications activity;
3. Utilising the potential of civic society to engage with all sectors of the community;
4. Working with Local Government to engage with local community based initiatives;
5. Engaging with key target audiences including older citizens and children and young people, to ensure greater levels of awareness and responsibility by the current and future adult population.

## **Objective 2: Developing appropriate training for healthcare professionals to increase levels of consent in order to achieve the 2020 strategy target of 80%**

### Commitment 6

The Department commits to increasing awareness of organ donation and the rate of consent by families by:

6. Providing high quality organ donation awareness training for medical professionals

## **Objectives and Key Commitments in Detail**

**Objective 1: Encouraging positive actions and behaviours in relation to organ donation**

Positive actions and behaviours means making our organ donation wishes known. This primarily involves encouraging potential donors to join the Organ Donor Register

(ODR), and helping people to discuss their organ donation wishes with family and friends. The Department working with the HSC will deliver this objective by developing and implementing the following measures, focussing on activities that encourage the consent discussion, drive registration, develop the ODR as an effective marketing tool, and support promotion at a local level. Within this, the HSC will:

## **Commitment 1**

- (i) Develop a rolling 3-year integrated HSC Communications Programme

Mass media advertising has been successful to a point in promoting positive attitudes towards organ donation, encouraging positive behaviours and influencing conversations<sup>2</sup>, however the effect of this approach in isolation can be short-lived. When combined with a sustained and co-ordinated programme of activities embracing contemporary marketing techniques the impact can potentially be more beneficial. This approach aims to embed a shift in public attitudes and a change in behaviours over the longer term, resulting in an anticipated higher rate of consent to donation.

Public Information campaigns have, in the past, been delivered in Northern Ireland on an ad hoc basis by various stakeholders including charities, the Public Health Agency and NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT)<sup>3</sup>, working either individually or collectively, and in the absence of a coordinated, strategic and ongoing approach to communications.

The Department therefore commits to developing a rolling 3-year integrated HSC Communications Programme. This Programme will combine regional and local promotional initiatives with NHSBT's expertise and UK-wide evidence-informed campaign activity in a way that is suitably tailored to meet priorities identified for Northern Ireland organ donation activities.

The Communications Programme and annual plans will take account of existing public information sources<sup>4</sup> by engaging with the public on organ donation issues through various platforms including the mass media, social media and local promotional events.

Annual plans will place particular attention on coordinating promotional activities in collaboration with relevant stakeholders (including charities, patients, donor families, HSC Trusts, local councils), around key dates for organ donation each year.

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<sup>2</sup> PHA report: Organ Donation - Evaluation of the 2017 public information campaign

<sup>3</sup> [NHS Blood and Transplant \(NHSBT\)](#) is a Special Health Authority in the NHS which is responsible for the allocation of organs for transplantation is across Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales; management of the Organ Donor Register (ODR); and running public information campaigns in relation to organ donation.

<sup>4</sup> The website <https://www.organdonationni.info> is the primary source of public health information about organ donation in Northern Ireland. It provides access to useful statistics, promotional resources in a variety of media, responses to Frequently Asked Questions, and links to facilitate registration on the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR)

## **Commitment 2**

### **(ii) Funding to Coordinate and Deliver Communications Activity**

The Department commits to providing a ring-fenced annual budget to fund the Communications Programme, to include delivery of promotional activities by a regional coordinator.

The role of the coordinator will include the development and delivery of the Communications Programme, overseen by a HSC Steering Group chaired by the Department. The Steering Group will comprise commissioners and HSC Trust Organ Donation Committees, clinicians and specialist nurses who are involved in organ donation and transplantation, as well as patient representatives. It will determine annual plans identifying priority areas for promotional campaign activity and funding in Northern Ireland, provide advice to the Department and Public Health Agency on these priorities, monitor the effectiveness of the Programme and ensure consistency in its delivery across the region.

The coordinator will also be responsible for maintaining appropriate links with NHSBT's ongoing campaign activity, in order to advise the Steering Group and coordinate as appropriate the delivery of any campaigns that will further Northern Ireland priorities within available the budget.

## **Commitment 3**

### **(iii) Utilise civic society by developing partnerships with other sectors**

The communications programme will place particular focus on developing partnerships with employers and related business organisations, statutory organisations such as public libraries and universities, and community and voluntary organisations to maximise their contribution to promoting organ donation. Each of these bodies engage with their particular audiences, such as employees, clients and volunteers, through a variety of interfaces which have the potential to help drive ODR registration. Partnership working presents an opportunity to promote organ donation via these networks by tailoring communications in order to maximise their effectiveness.

Technology and contemporary communications will be used as far as possible, e.g. developing compelling, emotive and regular content for delivery through partners' websites and social networks, and using providing staff and customers with web links to both the ODR and to organ donation information.

Employers: Working initially with HR leaders in large employers, campaigns will support the provision of advice and resources to facilitate the development of bespoke Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes. Through these programmes, employers provide information and encourage staff to learn about organ donation, discuss their views and wishes with friends and family, and join the ODR. CSR programmes can also identify organ donation champions to take the lead in promoting organ donation within their respective organisations and communities, with

appropriate support from the Department and HSC bodies. Some local companies have shown leadership in developing such initiatives, which can be used to educate and encourage others to do likewise.

Statutory Sector: Activities will seek to develop partnerships with statutory sector service providers will deliver tailored messages for various user groups, for example:

- Potential opportunities to collaborate with the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service in jointly promoting blood and organ donation;
- Working with the network of Northern Ireland libraries as important community hubs to display information, provide literature, and host educational events;
- Working with schools and colleges – see also paragraph (v) below – to develop appropriate curricular and extra-curricular programmes to educate students about organ donation.

Community and Voluntary Sector: these organisations, particularly those involved in organising and playing sports, promoting health and wellbeing, or representing the interests of health service patients, collectively involve significant numbers of the Northern Ireland population who are generally receptive to positive health messages. Activities will therefore seek to build partnerships with these organisations, to help stage promotional/learning events, and to provide information and resources which are suitable to the needs of their members.

#### **Commitment 4**

(iv) Work with Local Government to engage with Communities

Local Government's strong links with communities present a significant opportunity for positive engagement about organ donation at the local level. The Department therefore commits to working with HSC bodies and Northern Ireland's 11 local councils to collaborate on the development and implementation of local promotional campaigns using a variety of established communications channels. The aim will be to build on local community plan objectives aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of their citizens. The promotion of organ donation is seen by councils as an important element of that responsibility.

Local campaigns will be underpinned by a code of practice to support local councils: in the development of appropriate links with NHSBT to help deliver national promotional activities at a community level; closer partnership working between councils and HSC Trusts to jointly plan and coordinate promotional activities, messages and events; the development of volunteer networks to facilitate these activities; and the sharing of best practice across local government.

The Department will also publish local organ donation statistics available for every council area to support these local activities. Through this collaborative approach the Department aims to increase the number of ODR registrations and rates of donation in each council area.

## Commitment 5

Engaging with key target audiences including older citizens and children and young people, to ensure greater levels of awareness and responsibility by the current and future adult population

People of any age can register to be an organ donor<sup>5</sup>. It therefore stands to reason that children and young people they are provided with appropriate information about what this means at an early age, in order to help them make an informed choice and discuss this with their friends and family.

The *Young Persons' Behaviour & Attitudes Survey 2016*<sup>6</sup> shows that children and young people in Northern Ireland have mostly favourable views in relation to organ donation, generally seeing it as something positive that can come out of someone's death. However, there is scope to improve their understanding around some aspects of organ donation, and less than half of those surveyed had discussed their views with their close family members.

Recognising the value of encouraging positive attitudes amongst young people towards health and wellbeing matters in general, the Department commits to ensuring that the communications programme will include a co-ordinated approach to working with schools and youth organisations in order to increase knowledge and understanding about organ donation, and encourage young people to discuss the subject amongst friends and family.

It will support and build upon established good practice that has been developed by local champions within Northern Ireland (including teachers, youth leaders, and pupils), to make educational resources and support available to expand and deliver curricular and extra-curricular programmes tailored for various age groups. The Department of Health will work with the Department of Education to facilitate the delivery of this part of the plan.

Furthermore, contrary to the myth that someone's age might prevent them from becoming an organ donor, it is important to remember that patients who die in circumstances where donation may be possible are considered individually, irrespective of how old they are. For example, in 2016/17, the average age of a deceased donor in the UK was 51, with 60% of donations coming from the over 50 age group<sup>7</sup>. The average age of a living donor was 47%, with 44% of donations coming from the over 50 age group<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Everyone irrespective of age or health and who is considered legally competent can join the NHS Organ Donor Register. Doing so provides legal consent for the donation of organs. Children can register but their parents, guardians or those with parental responsibility will be asked to provide their consent should the child's death lead to donation being considered.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/YPBAS2016ToplineResults.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Whether or not someone's organs after death can be safely used to help others is determined at the time through a number of assessments. Information from the patient's clinical and social history is also considered from medical records and the person's next of kin.

<sup>8</sup> Potential living kidney donors undergo a series of tests to ensure that they are suitable and that it is safe for them to donate.

The communications programme will therefore also seek to deliver appropriate clear 'myth busting' messages to encourage those in older age groups to consider and discuss their organ donation wishes.

**Objective 2: The HSC will develop appropriate training for healthcare professionals to increase levels of consent in order to achieve the 2020 strategy target of 80%**

Only a small proportion of people die in circumstances where it may be possible for their organs to be donated. It is vitally important that in these circumstances families are given the option of consenting to organ donation. Usually this will be in a hospital intensive care setting, and the approach to families must be sensitively managed. They should be referred as early as possible to a *Specialist Nurse - Organ Donation* (SNOD) working within the intensive care unit and equipped with the specialist knowledge and skills to discuss donation and, if known, their loved one's wishes.

In order for referral opportunities to be realised, it is also important that all health professionals involved in the journey with that patient and their family are equipped with appropriate knowledge about organ donation and about the SNOD referral process.

Through this approach, discussing organ donation should become a normal part of end-of-life care for the families of patients in these circumstances. All families, where organ donation is a possibility, will be approached in line with best practice principles.

The Department has endorsed NICE CG135<sup>9</sup>, and NHSBT Best Practice Guidance on approaching the families of potential organ donors<sup>10</sup>, which reinforce that every approach to those close to the patient should be planned with the multidisciplinary team (MDT), should involve the SNOD, and should be clearly planned taking into account the known wishes of the patient. The ODR should be checked in all cases of potential donation, and this information must be discussed with the family as it represents the eligible donor's legal consent to donation.

In the UK as a whole in 2016/17, consent rates when a SNOD was involved in the discussion with the potential donor's family were 68.6%, compared to 27.5% when a SNOD was not involved.

These figures clearly demonstrate the positive difference that effective referral by appropriately trained professional makes to securing the consent of families. Maximising potential donation opportunities when they arise is the key to improving the consent rate and achieving the 2020 target of 80%. Non-referral of potential donors and the resultant low consent rates represent missed opportunities to save lives, and should therefore be minimised.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG135>

<sup>10</sup> [http://odt.nhs.uk/pdf/family\\_approach\\_best\\_practice\\_guide.pdf](http://odt.nhs.uk/pdf/family_approach_best_practice_guide.pdf)

Reflecting the above, a number of approaches have been identified which are aimed at developing and delivering appropriate training for different healthcare professionals involved at all stages of the consent journey, in order to increase their awareness of organ donation and their understanding of the SNOD referral process.

## **Commitment 6**

Providing high quality organ donation awareness training for healthcare professionals

The Department therefore commits, subject to available resources, to working with the HSC, training bodies, universities, and NHSBT to implement the following initiatives and to monitor their delivery:

- (i) *Medical Students: To include organ donation in the undergraduate medical curriculum.*

Currently organ donation is not formally included in the curriculum, however Queen's University Belfast has indicated that it would support its formal inclusion and has identified potential space within the first and final year teaching programmes to deliver this.

- (ii) *Medical Trainees: To include mandatory organ donation training for all medical trainees pursuing a career where it is of greatest relevance (principally those training in critical care and emergency medicine).*

Trainees will be supported by NIMDTA and training programme directors to attend a national organ donation simulation course, e.g. that which is currently provided by NHSBT in England. The viability of a providing this training locally will also be explored.

- (iii) *Consultants and Specialists: To include training on organ donation as an element of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the revalidation cycle for all Consultants and specialty doctors within critical care and emergency medicine.*

- (iv) *GP trainees: To include organ donation in the postgraduate curriculum for GP training.*

This would increase awareness of organ donation in the wider primary care physician community, enabling them to discuss patients' wishes and medical needs in relation to organ donation and transplantation. This was supported by the Director of Postgraduate GP Education.

- (v) *Nurses: To develop and deliver appropriate training for all HSC nursing staff in secondary care settings to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver their professional roles and responsibilities around organ donation.*

Training for staff working in non-specialist nursing roles is not formally mandated, however in the past bespoke training and has been developed and delivered on

an ad-hoc basis in partnership with local education establishments, HSC Trusts and the Northern Ireland Organ Donation Services Team of specialist nurses. The opportunity exists to deliver training on a consistent and universal basis through HSC Trusts and third level education providers.

The Department will work with HSC Trusts and the relevant education providers to establish a consistent, quality-assured, tiered education and awareness programme on organ donation. This will be integrated into existing training frameworks, including Trust Induction programmes and pre and post-registration third level education. Exploration of new educational delivery methods, including a regional e-learning programme and a bespoke MDT training programme for nurses will also be considered.

### **Annual report**

The Department will produce an annual report on the promotional activity undertaken in each financial year to promote organ donation and transplantation, and relevant statistical information about the number and nature of transplantations carried out. The report will be laid before the Assembly and made available on the Department's website.

In line with part 4 of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, at least once every five years, the report will include the Department's opinion as to whether the legislative duty imposed by the Act has been effective in promoting transplantation, and will provide any recommendations the Department considers appropriate for amending the law so as to promote transplantation.

### **Personal and Public Involvement**

Patients, clients, carers and communities should be at the centre of decision making in health and social care. This means that they must be meaningfully involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of their services. HSC bodies have a statutory requirement and are accountable to people and communities for the quality, accessibility and responsiveness of the services they plan and provide.

In light of this, the Department has engaged with relevant stakeholders in the development of this policy guidance statement, including the families of organ donors, patients who have received organ transplants, patient representative groups, local government, community organisations, the Children's Commissioner and the general public, through a variety of platforms including workshops, social media, and consultation questionnaires.

### **Implementation of the Policy Guidance Statement**

Implementation of the policy guidance statement will be coordinated by a dedicated programme manager and overseen by a Department-led HSC Oversight Group which will include patient representative groups.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Public Health Agency will:

- deliver local media campaigns across appropriate platforms in line with the communications plan;
- work in conjunction with the Health and Social Care Board, Trusts and NHSBT to tailor media communications appropriate in order to maximise their impact locally; and,
- use health intelligence data to measure and report on the impact of promotional activities

Health and Social Care Trusts will, through their Organ Donation Committees:

- promote and facilitate the referral of patients in circumstances where donation may be possible;
- promote and facilitate the delivery of appropriate training for clinical and nursing staff to increase awareness of organ donation and referral processes; and,
- work with local government and the voluntary sector to promote the benefits of donation in their local communities.

### ***How Organ Donation and Transplantation works in Northern Ireland***

Organ donation and the allocation of organs for transplantation is managed across Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales by NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT).

NHSBT is responsible for managing the ODR, the UK's national transplant waiting list, matching and allocating organs on a UK-wide basis, and retrieving donated organs and transporting them to the appropriate centre for transplantation. While this means that some organs from donors in Northern Ireland may go to people in other parts of the UK (and occasionally elsewhere in Europe), it also means that people in Northern Ireland can benefit from the opportunity of receiving an organ from elsewhere in the UK and the rest of Europe.

Organs need to be carefully matched to a recipient, taking into account the blood group, age, weight and the tissue type of the donor and potential recipient. This is important to give the best possible chance for a transplant to be successful. If an organ is not a good match with the recipient, there is a risk that it won't function effectively.

### ***Becoming an Organ Donor after Death***

People who wish to donate their organs after their death can join the NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR), or simply make their donation wishes known to a close relative or friend. In the event of someone's death, whether they have joined the register or not, it is up to families give final consent for organ donation to take place. Knowing that their relative had signed up to the ODR often helps with that decision. Knowing that during their lifetime they had expressed a wish to become an organ donor is equally important.

However, only a small proportion of people die in circumstances where it is possible for them to be an organ donor, e.g. in an intensive care unit<sup>11</sup>. Only in these limited circumstances will it be possible for healthcare professionals to discuss the person's wishes with their families, or to check whether they have been registered on the ODR. Even then, there may be reasons as to why donation is not possible at that time. This is why it is important for loved ones to know what the wishes of the deceased person were during their lifetime.

In these circumstances the SNOD will check to see if the patient has authorised donation themselves, and commence the sensitive discussion with the patient's family with regard to donation. If donation is to proceed, the clinical team caring for the patient will work with the SNOD, who will ensure all the necessary clinical checks are made. This will include checking that there are suitable recipients for each organ that can be donated.

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<sup>11</sup> *Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020 2 Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020 – A UK Strategy* notes that over half a million people die each year in the UK, but fewer than 5000 people each year die in circumstances or from conditions where they could become donors.

Throughout this process, the comfort and needs of the donor patient remain paramount and the main focus of the clinical staff in the critical care unit will be on caring for their patient. SNODs also support the donor's family during this difficult time and to answer any questions the family has.

The organs are then retrieved by a completely different team of specialist surgeons who are not otherwise involved in the care of the patient. Organs are always removed with the greatest care and respect. They are then stored in fluid and usually kept cool to help preserve them and transported to whichever hospital or hospitals will carry out the transplant(s). As soon as possible, a separate team of surgeons will then transplant each organ into the patient who is going to receive it.

By ensuring that potential donors are referred to the SNOD service at the appropriate time along the patient's donation journey, and by maximising the number of people who have had an informed discussion about their donation wishes with their families, there is potential to increase the consent rate and thus the amount of actual donors year on year.

### ***Becoming a Living Organ Donor***

It is also possible to be a living donor. This most commonly occurs through kidney donation, when one kidney is removed from a healthy individual and transplanted into another person. In recent years, it has also become possible for people to donate part of their liver.

Living donation is obviously a very major decision, and every potential living donor who comes forward undergoes a series of tests to ensure that they are suitable and that it is safe for them to donate. All live donors and recipients are reviewed by an independent assessor who is responsible for making sure there's no pressure or coercion involved, and that all parties understand the risk of complications.

The Organ Donor Register is only for those who wish to donate after death. To be a living donor, people can contact a transplant centre directly.

### ***Further information***

- Information about organ donation in Northern Ireland:  
<https://www.organdonationni.info>
- NHS Organ Donation Website including links to the **Organ Donor Register**:  
<https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/>