

# Frequently Asked Questions about Kidney Transplantation at Leeds during COVID19 pandemic

19<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **Q: Is the kidney transplant programme in Leeds still running?**

Until very recently, the kidney transplant programme in Leeds was suspended. At the moment, the programme has been partially re-opened to lower risk patients.

## **Q: Am I active on the kidney transplant waiting list at the moment?**

No. Unfortunately, we believe there are factors in your situation which mean it is not safe for you to be re-activated on the kidney transplant waiting list at this point.

Relevant factors are related to coronavirus COVID19 in some way (please see below).

We are optimistic we will be able to broaden the group of patients eligible for re-activation over time. However, we do not yet know when that will be.

## **Q: How have you come to the decision to partially re-open the kidney transplant programme?**

A wide variety of hospital specialists have been involved in this decision, including kidney doctors, transplant surgeons, virologists, infection prevention specialists, immunology experts, and others. We have concluded it is safe to re-open the programme to a limited number of low risk patients at the moment, and hopefully to everyone else on the waiting list in due course.

## **Q: Why are you not re-opening the programme in full?**

The re-opening of the kidney transplant programme is a partial re-opening of the deceased donor kidney transplant programme. Only lower risk patients waiting for a kidney transplant are being offered the option of being re-activated on the list at this stage.

The living donor kidney transplant programme is not currently open.

We want to re-open the programme in full to everyone, but some patients have risk factors for serious illness, or even death, in the context of the coronavirus COVID19 pandemic, which means it is not safe for them to be part of the limited re-opening at the moment, as detailed below

This does not necessarily mean they are unwell at the moment – in fact those patients may be doing fine in their current situation, and continuing their usual kidney disease treatment. Instead it means that if they had a kidney transplant, in addition to their current risk factors, we might do them harm and allow them to become seriously ill, or even die, especially if they caught coronavirus COVID19.

As soon as we believe it is safe for these patients, we will open the programme for them as well.

**Q: Why is it safe for some patients on the waiting list and not others?**

Coronavirus COVID19 impacts different patients in different ways. Not everything about this is yet understood. However, some factors, such as the age of the person, are clear.

We have based our assessment of who to re-activate on the best currently available information about risks of serious harm from coronavirus COVID19.

**Q: What are the factors which mean that someone is not being re-activated on the kidney transplant waiting list at this time?**

There are several things that mean someone might not be suitable for re-activation on the kidney transplant waiting list at the moment. These include:

- Older patients: Coronavirus COVID19 affects older patients more severely than younger patients. We do not want to do anything that increases the risk of an older patient catching coronavirus COVID19.
- Complex surgery: we need to perform operations that are straightforward, more routine, and not more complex ones where the patients may have additional problems after the operation, and a longer hospital stay, so that their risk of problems from coronavirus COVID19 is not high. Our surgical team have identified patients where complex surgery would be needed, and they are not being re-activated at this stage.
- Complicated immunology: some people have complex immune systems which mean they would need more anti-rejection medication than usual to have a

kidney transplant. Having more anti-rejection medication than usual puts them at more risk of getting coronavirus COVID19, and of getting it severely. Our Transplant Immunology Laboratory, along with the kidney transplant doctors, have identified patients for who this is relevant.

- No immediate need for dialysis: If someone is stable and not anticipated to need dialysis in the near future, we think it is better for them not to come to hospital for a kidney transplant, and to wait for safer circumstances to be re-activated on the kidney transplant waiting list.
- Patients who need High Dependency care after an operation due to other conditions: the High Dependency and Intensive Care areas of NHS hospitals are currently in use primarily for patients suffering with coronavirus COVID19. As a result, it would be risky to perform a kidney transplant on a patient we expect to need High Dependency level care after the operation, because we would expose them to increased risk of catching coronavirus COVID19 in that environment.

**Q: So would it be better for me to simply wait until the pandemic is over before being active on the kidney transplant list again?**

Possibly. The answer to this question will depend on your individual circumstances, and your current kidney treatments, and your own decisions about risk. We think that for you, the balance of probability is that becoming active on the kidney transplant waiting list, and receiving a kidney transplant, at the moment, may harm you. This balance of risk and benefit may change over time as we learn more about coronavirus COVID19, and as new ways of dealing with it emerge in medical practise.

**Q: If my situation changes will you reconsider whether I can be re-activated on the kidney transplant waiting list?**

Yes. We will re-look at each patient's situation if it changes

**Q: I had a living donor ready to go / under workup. What should I do?**

We are not opening the living donor kidney transplant programme at the moment.

If the living donor kidney transplant programme reopens, the kidney transplant team will carefully consider each possible living donor kidney transplant.

It is likely we will not be able to do some of the living donor kidney transplants we had planned to do, if the person who was planned to receive the kidney has the risk factors we are concerned about, even if the living donor part of the kidney transplant programme opens in the future.

**Q: Now that the kidney transplant programme is partially re-opened, do you expect it to stay open?**

We will make every effort to keep the programme open, and to gradually resume a full service, whilst continuing to take account of the risks caused by coronavirus COVID19.

However, there is a small possibility, especially if coronavirus COVID19 cases surge again in the future, that the programme may have to be suspended again temporarily.

**Q: What do I do if I am not well at the moment, and think I might have coronavirus COVID19?**

Please contact either your GP, NHS 111, or use 999 in a medical emergency. If you are a haemodialysis patient contact your dialysis unit before attending for any dialysis.

**Q: Who do I contact if I want to ask other questions?**

Please contact the kidney transplant coordinators on 0113 206 4930. They will either answer your questions or arrange for another member of the kidney transplant team to contact you.

**Q: How confident are you about the information provided in this FAQ?**

This FAQ was written using the best information available at the time of writing (May 2020). However, the available information on the impact of coronavirus COVID19 is constantly changing as more knowledge is built up across the UK, and the world. If the situation changes in a way that changes what is said in this FAQ, and affects whether it is safe of you to be re-activated on the kidney transplant waiting list, we will contact you about that. We will talk you though the most up to date information at the time, because information in this FAQ may have become out of date.