

NHSBT Board Meeting – 28 January 2021

Written update from Northern Ireland

Introduction of an Opt Out System for Organ Donation

On 22 July 2020, Minister Swann issued a press statement announcing his intention to hold a consultation in the autumn on policy proposals for the introduction of a soft opt out system for organ donation.

The Department has worked closely with NHSBT in developing the consultation and it was launched on 11 December and will run until 19 February. Full details of the consultation, and how to respond, can be found on the Department's website at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/organ-donation>.

A series of virtual stakeholder events are taking place during January and consist of a number of public events and others targeted at specific groups of stakeholders. Additional events will be arranged if requested.

The response to the consultation will inform the development of a draft Bill for consideration by the Northern Ireland Assembly in order to enshrine the proposed changes in law.

Renal Transplant Service

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the kidney transplant service in Belfast remains temporarily paused, other than for highly sensitised patients for whom it is extremely difficult to find a suitable match.

Whilst the position is likely to remain extremely challenging for the foreseeable future, the Minister remains clear in his intention to sustain elective and essential services as far as possible, and to maximise the use of any available theatre capacity across the system as soon as we begin to emerge from the current peak in COVID-19 hospital admissions.

Given that the resumption of transplant surgery potentially requires alternative locations to be explored and robust plans developed which satisfy all of the relevant safety, staffing, licencing and accommodation criteria that need to be met in the delivery of such services, the Department continues to work with the Health and Social Care Board, Trusts and NHSBT to explore viable options to restore the service as soon as practically possible.