

NHSBT Board Meeting – 25 March 2021

Written update from Northern Ireland

Introduction of an Opt Out System for Organ Donation

A consultation to seek the public's views on how to introduce a soft opt-out system for organ donation in Northern Ireland ran from 11 December 2020 until 19 February 2021.

Eight virtual engagement events were held during the consultation period and almost 2,000 written responses were received. The responses are now being analysed and will inform a draft Bill, which we would envisage to be similar to the English Act, for consideration by the Northern Ireland Assembly in order to enshrine the proposed changes in law.

During the process, we have worked closely with colleagues in NHSTB and are very grateful for their expert advice and assistance that has enabled the Department to make such significant progress over recent months.

Kidney Transplant Service

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

Officials have been working closely with Commissioners, Trusts and NHSBT and it is expected that living donor kidney transplants will resume, initially in a limited capacity, from late March. It is also expected that the Belfast Trust will commit to the next matching run in April for the UK Living Kidney Sharing Scheme, with resulting transplants expected to take place in May and June.

Work is continuing to re-establish living donor transplants for those that fall into the FSSA P2 category and for the full resumption of the deceased donor transplant service (currently only being carried out for the most highly sensitised patients).

Organ Donation Steering Group

A further meeting of the Organ Donation Steering Group, which was established to oversee the Department's statutory duty to promote organ donation, took place in early March. At this meeting, which included representatives from the newly convened Charity and Stakeholder Sub-group, the annual Organ Donation Promotion Workplan for 2021/22 was approved. The next meeting will take place in May/June 2021.