

**COVID - 19 Bulletin Number 32  
Containing Important Announcements**

**Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Directorate**

**25 May 2021**

## Message from OTDT Medical Director Professor John Forsythe

Dear Colleagues

As we are fast approaching the end of the month, I wanted to provide another Bulletin – but different to many that have gone before and, as we swivel to look into the future, this note contains **important announcements**.

We have had some exciting new projects and tools go live which will hopefully benefit patients and clinicians alike.

As ever, I want to thank you all for your continued hard work and all you do to support donors and their families as well as transplant patients.

With kind regards,

John Forsythe

## Secretary of State for Health and Social Care establishes a new Organ Utilisation Group

Matt Hancock, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has asked for the establishment of a new Organ Utilisation Group, to make recommendations on how to ensure that the service can keep pace with the anticipated increase in organs available for transplant after the successful introduction of Deemed Consent legislation.

The Organ Utilisation Group will review the organ transplantation infrastructure, to explore how the resources already available can be best utilised, to meet the needs of patients. The Group will be asked to deliver recommendations on how the barriers to organ transplantation can be addressed, so that the UK continues as a world-leader in innovation in the field of transplantation and no opportunity for a successful transplant operation is missed. The Group will be focussed on England, but it is acknowledged that patients travel across UK borders and any changes in England may influence activity in the rest of the country. There is close liaison with colleagues in Departments of Health across the UK.

We are pleased to confirm that Professor Steve Powis has been asked to Chair the Group, with the Secretariat support provided by NHS Blood and Transplant. The membership is in the process of being confirmed and we are aiming for the first meeting to be held in early summer.

Whilst the membership will, by necessity, be limited, it is important to seek the views of a wide range of national and international stakeholders. There will therefore be stakeholder engagement events throughout the work of the Group. Further details will be shared in due course. If you have any queries about the group then please contact Claire Williment ([Claire.Williment@nhsbt.nhs.uk](mailto:Claire.Williment@nhsbt.nhs.uk)).

## First National Organ Utilisation Conference (and an announcement on 'CLUs 2.0')

On the 20<sup>th</sup> May we held the First National Organ Utilisation Conference. The morning session was attended by over 130 people including government health departments, senior clinicians, the OTDT Senior Management Team and other key stakeholders. We presented progress and gathered feedback on a range of organ utilisation initiatives, with a particular focus on recognising the work of the Clinical Leads for Utilisation (CLUs). I am delighted to be able to announce that we have now secured funding to implement a new phase of the CLU scheme until March 2022 – further details of this will be publicised in due course.

The afternoon session comprised a series of “break-out” sessions for small groups of CLUs to explore the theme of “Excellence in Organ Utilisation” in more detail and share their ideas. There were some fascinating and productive discussions held in all of the sessions and we hope to be able to share the outputs of these in due course. I would also like to extend my thanks all those who kindly agreed to chair and facilitate sessions and to all the participants for their excellent engagement and enthusiasm.

If anyone was unable to attend a recording of the morning session will be made available soon.

## **NHSBT Organ Utilisation Programme**

NHS Blood and Transplant is in the process of establishing a new Organ Utilisation Programme to drive the improvements in deceased donor organ utilisation. The programme’s objective will be to support optimal organ utilisation in every deceased donor organ group, benefiting from new technologies and techniques. There will be a large number of projects that will fall under the programme. These include some projects already underway, as well as new actions within the draft UK strategy ‘Meeting the Need’ and any recommendations arising from the Organ Utilisation Group that fall within NHSBT’s remit to deliver. The project list is still being defined, but is expected to include:

- Assessment & Recovery Centres
- Clinical Leads for Utilisation (CLUs)
- A review of data provided to Trusts/Boards and how this is used (including implementation of Lack of Resources Decline notifications for all organs)
- Solutions to enable improved sharing of data (particularly imaging/video) between donor and recipient centres
- Actions identified through the CLU scheme and the National Organ Utilisation Conference in May 2021
- Actions identified in the Lung Summit in 2019, which were paused due to COVID restrictions

The programme will not cover projects that are already well established and under way (e.g. DCD Hearts) or improvements that would be considered ‘business as usual’ (e.g. improvements to the allocation systems led by the Advisory Groups). If you have any thoughts on projects that should be included in the programme please contact Claire Williment (Claire.Williment@nhsbt.nhs.uk).

The scope of this programme will be kept under continual review as circumstances change, but we anticipate that that it will take 3-5 years to deliver.

## **Quick Reference Guide to Donor Transmissible Disease (QRTG) digital web tool (this had been known as an Aide Memoire for the SaBTO guidance)**

I am pleased to announce that 28th April saw the successful deployment of the Quick Reference Guide to Donor Transmissible Disease (QRTG) digital web tool.

The project has been led by the DORA (Donor Organ Risk Assessment) Working Group that is jointly accountable to SaBTO (The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs) – a four UK country advisory group, and NHSBT. DORA has been developing this tool to assist clinician decision-making regarding organs that may be perceived to confer a higher risk for recipients after transplantation. The tool takes the form of an aide memoire which summarises existing guidance from SaBTO and elsewhere regarding the use of organs from donors with infection, malignancy, autoimmune conditions, and other donor attributes.

It is envisaged that the QRTG digital web tool will contribute to a reduction in the decline of donor organs for transplantation. It can be accessed via the ODT website [odt.nhs.uk](https://odt.nhs.uk) or [here](#).

Dr Rachel Hilton (transplant nephrologist, DORA Co-Chair and SaBTO member) commented:

**‘The Quick Reference Guide to Donor Transmissible Disease collates and summarises a wealth of existing guidance on the use of organs from donors with co-morbidities that may**

confer risk to the recipient. By providing guidance within a single, easy to use online tool we hope to facilitate appropriate matching of organs to recipients and enable increased organ acceptance and transplantation, for the ultimate benefit of patients and donor families.'

The delivery of this digital quick reference guide aligns strongly with four of keys areas of action detailed within the current ODT strategy. It is an excellent example of organisations working together to deliver a complex project that will support colleagues working within the field of transplantation.

We hope this informs any discussions in the difficult decisions that often arise for patients and clinicians in viewing a particular organ offer. We hope to announce other aids in this area shortly.

## Patient Information Website for Organ Transplantation

I hope that you will have heard that the new national patient information website for organ transplantation launched at the end of March. <https://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/organ-transplantation/>. As a result of this joint NHSBT and BTS initiative the site provides information on the benefits and risks of an organ transplant to patients aged 18 years and over and their families. It gives clear, concise, and accessible information on kidney, lung, liver, heart, and pancreas transplantation.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to the project team led by Chris Callaghan who have been working closely with stakeholders across the transplant community to develop this site and create an invaluable tool for patients and their families. Thank you in particular to lay members and patients for their considerable input to this important project.

Chris and the team will continue to modify and improve the site as feedback is received.

## COVID – 19 Activity Summary

Here is the usual activity summary data – you will see that this has returned largely to normal levels – indeed the 'year to date' numbers are higher than the corresponding period pre COVID. Thank you to the Stats team who continue to monitor comprehensive data sources to inform the Clinical team in any action that requires to be undertaken.

**Figure 1 Effect CoVID-19 has on Deceased Donation and Transplantation**  
Number of deceased donors and transplants by week since 1 April 2019

