



Foreword

Transplantation would not be possible without the generosity of those who choose to give life to others through organ donation, whether living or deceased. Thanks to the 1,397 donors who gave their organs after death last year and the 909 living donors, 4,324 transplant operations took place saving the lives of so many patients in need of an organ transplant. This equates to an increase of 18% in organ donors and 27% more transplants than last year. Almost 30 million people in the UK have now registered their donation decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register, with almost 28 million of those choosing to opt-in to organ donation. Last year (2021/22) there was also an increase of 27% in the total number of corneas retrieved to NHSBT Eye Banks and a 33% uplift in the total number of corneal transplants. Corneas were retrieved from 1,787 cornea-only donors and from 483 solid organ donors who agreed to also donate their corneas.

There is no hiding the fact that the NHS has been through the toughest of times recently due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. During the pandemic, the characteristics of the donors changed to enable more organs to be donated by fewer, younger donors. However, this was reversed last year, and the donor pool has widened once more to include older donors. The consent/authorisation rate fell slightly last year from 69% of families supporting donation at the point of asking, to 66% of families last year. Despite this fall in consent/authorisation, deceased organ donation and transplant activity is now almost back to pre-covid levels of activity (1,600 deceased donors and 4,990 transplants in 2018/19). Living donation also resumed last year, with 909 people giving a kidney or part of their liver. Living donors accounted for almost 40% of the total number of organ donors last year. Even with these improvements the waiting list increased again last year as non-urgent patients have now been reactivated following a suspension during the pandemic and more patients have been added to the transplant lists. Sadly, last year 429 patients died while waiting for a transplant (compared to 525 in 2020/21) and a further 644 were removed from the transplant list due to deteriorating health and ineligibility for transplant.

A number of opportunities are emerging to drive forward further and future improvements. The law changed in England in 2020, Scotland in 2021 and deemed legislation gained Royal Assent in Northern Ireland in 2022. In June last year a new strategy for organ donation and transplantation was launched, Organ Donation and Transplantation: Meeting the Need, which sets the ambition for 2030, building upon past successes while planning service improvements for the future. The aim is to balance the evolution of current best practice with a revolution in new technologies and research to deliver real improvements for people in desperate need of a transplant.

Diversity and inclusion are a key priority going forward. Surveys show that families from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to discuss organ donation and are much more likely to decline the option of organ donation when offered the opportunity to donate. Proportionately, more people from ethnic minorities need transplants than the rest of the UK population. In 2020/21, 8% of donors were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. By contrast, these ethnicities are estimated to represent 14% of the UK population. Much is being done to address this issue, but there is more to do working in partnership with charities, stakeholders, community groups and clinical teams to close the gap between those from ethnic minority communities willing to donate and those in need of a transplant.



No lifesaving transplant would be possible without the generosity of every donor and their families, who give their support and say 'yes' to organ donation. We owe it to these people and their families, as well as those waiting, to ensure that we honour their precious gift of life and make the most of every opportunity to save and improve lives.



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