



Foreword

Organ Donation and Transplantation remains a vital part of the NHS' work in saving lives. Thanks to the 1,429 people who donated their organs after death and the 958 living donors last year (2022/23), 4,533 people with organ failure, who desperately needed a transplant, were given a gift of life.

While the global pandemic reduced the opportunity for lifesaving and life-transforming organ [and tissue] transplantation, we are achieving a steady return to pre-pandemic donation and transplantation activity levels. This Activity Report highlights a 4% increase of patients receiving a transplant last year than the previous year, which is 5% off pre-pandemic levels.

However, this increase is not enough to meet the need of those needing an organ transplant. The sad fact is transplant waiting lists have returned to levels last seen in 2014. There were 6,959 patients waiting for a transplant with a further 3,822 temporarily suspended from transplant lists as of the end of March 2023. Last year (2022/23), 439 patients died while on the active list waiting for their transplant compared with 429 in the previous year. A further 732 were removed from the transplant list, mostly as a result of deteriorating health and ineligibility for transplant.

There are several ongoing challenges. Organ donation is a very precise science. Only one per cent of people who die in the UK every year die in the right circumstances and in the right location to be eligible for their organs to be used to save someone's life. That is why we need as large a pool of people as possible who have agreed to donate their organs by signing the NHS Organ Donor Register and telling their families what they want to happen when they die; and also why we need to embrace technology and innovation to utilise as many of those donated organs as we can.

The consent/authorisation rates for organ donation fell again last year from 66% to 62%. The main reason given as to why families did not support organ donation is because their loved one had previously expressed a wish not to donate. Overall last year, 1130 families declined support for organ donation, meaning hundreds of opportunities for transplant were missed. Ultimately the more people who sign the NHS Organ Donor Register and tell their families of their decision to be a donor, the more families will support that decision and the more lives will be saved.

The number of patients donating after brain stem death (DBD) is decreasing, but patients donating after circulatory death (DCD) is increasing. This shift poses challenges for the type and quality of organs that can be donated. This is where we need to use resources that enable the utilisation of more organs from DCD patients.

Existing initiatives such as abdominal normothermic regional perfusion (ANRP) of donors after circulatory death to improve liver outcomes and facilitating the transplantation of hearts from donors after circulatory death (DCD), are working well. Last year there was a 20% increase in the number of people receiving a heart transplant – 55 of those patients receiving a heart through DCD donation. The DCD hearts programme now accounts for around a third of all heart transplants in the UK. These are highly successful programmes that have saved hundreds of lives since their creation.

There is growing evidence that new perfusion technology gives clinicians more confidence to transplant more organs successfully by reducing damage during organ transport and providing a mechanism to repair and recover donated organs. Renewed partnerships with our stakeholders and initiatives like the Organ Utilisation Group are focused on developing these and other initiatives.



Compared to last year (2021/22), the number of cornea-only donors increased by 7%, while the number of cornea and solid organ donors fell by 8%. In 2022/23, corneas were retrieved from 246 organ donors after brain death (DBD) and 201 organ donors after circulatory death (DCD). Despite the number of donors increasing last year, the number of actual transplants fell by 4%.

Through the dedication of the donation and transplantation community and the generosity of our donors and their families we will return to baseline pre-pandemic levels of donation and transplantation activity. More is needed if we are to implement our vision for honouring the gift of donation and meeting the need of all who require transplantation.



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