

NHSBT Board Meeting – 6 June 2024

Written update from Northern Ireland

Change of Minister

The Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, stepped down from his post on 28 May 2024 – the new Minister, Mike Nesbitt MLA, took up post on 29 May.

NI Promotional Activity Update – May 2024

Deemed consent legislation

The Deemed Consent project was successfully closed and is now taken forward under business as usual; however, key metrics associated with the law change are still being measured.

Figures for awareness of the law change rose from 55% baseline (January 2022, pre-awareness campaign) to 71% (January 2023, post-awareness campaigns). It remained relatively stable across 2023.

Although to be still quality assured, initial figures for the latest research interval in April 2024 show a drop-off in awareness to 61%. However, it should be noted that the planned awareness campaign burst in early 2024 was cancelled due to budget pressures, and this may be a contributing factor.

Figures for anticipated donation decision under the new law showed 61% intended to donate; 15% intended to refuse donation and 24% were undecided. Intention to donate has dropped to baseline levels, with refusing to donate remaining stable between August 2023 and April 2024 and the proportion of participants remaining undecided increasing slightly.

Q4 ODR figures for NI show 56% registered on ODR -

- 55% opt-in (1,047,840) – an increase of 10,683 from Q3
- 1% opt-out (22,346) – an increase of 444 from Q3

Despite the drop-off on the above metrics, overall support for organ donation remains high at 90%, and those saying that organ donation is a gift of life for whoever receives it remains high at 93%.

Evolution of campaign messaging (organic activity and, if approved, paid-for activity) has now been tested via focus groups. This was to test the audience's understanding of the law change and any confusion that might arise as to why they are still being encouraged to sign the register. It revealed the need to be very clear in why they are being asked to sign the register and the benefit of doing so. It also revealed the continued need for FAQs to be explained and to integrate personal stories as a means of engaging people.

A decision on future campaign activity and associated available funding is tbc.

Rolling programme of education and awareness

Planning is underway for all education and awareness activities for 2024/25, and an outline of these follows:

- **Initiatives**

As per the previous update, the development of initiatives and partnerships will be increasingly relied upon in the absence of higher-level awareness campaign activity.

Imminent and recent events include:

- Queen's University – 22 May – screening of 'Life on the List' documentary with over 100 first year medical students, which included a panel discussion with two renal surgeons, kidney recipients and living kidney donor from a locally made documentary.
- 'The Call' photographic exhibition is launching in Northern Ireland on Friday 31 May. It has been arranged in conjunction with the first anniversary of 'Dáithí's Law' deemed consent legislation and will feature an unveiling of Dáithí's image into the exhibition. It will be on display for two weeks in an iconic venue and is open to the public free of charge.
- Another event to mark the law change anniversary is taking place at Belfast City Hall on Saturday 1 June and will also celebrate the gift of life through

organ and blood donation. It is being organised in partnership with the NI Blood Transfusion Service (NIBTS) and will take the form of a family fun day to encourage the general public to get involved and find out more. It will also promote organ and blood donation during w/c 3 June using the NIBTS regional donation clinics.

- **Outreach and engagement work**

A schedule of events for 2024 continues to be developed, which includes a range of engagement opportunities with the general public, workplace audiences and educational settings.

Circulation of materials continues with the support of various partners such as local councils, libraries, community pharmacies and GP practices.

- **Schools resources**

Work is underway with NHSBT's education advisor, who developed their post-primary resources, to get these resources updated for NI and launched.

- **Organ donation Week 2024**

Planning is underway around the *Turn the Peaks Pink* challenge to ensure NI supports and maximises the UK-wide initiative.