



# Foreword

Transplantation is a milestone in modern medicine, and we are continuing to build on the progress of recent years. Thanks to the 1,510 people who donated their organs after death and the 938 living donors last year (2023/24), 4,651 people with organ failure, who desperately needed a transplant, were given a gift of life. This represents a 6% increase in deceased organ donors and 3% increase in the number of people receiving transplants on the previous year.

However, this increase is not enough to meet the need of those desperately waiting for an organ transplant. The number of people on the active transplant waiting list reached 7,484 at the end of March 2024, with a further 3,795 temporarily suspended because they were unfit or otherwise unavailable for a transplant. This is the highest number of people in need of a transplant in the last decade.

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 to support their decision.

Overall consent/authorisation for organ donation has fallen by 1% (from 62% to 61%). Deemed consent/authorisation last year was 51%. We know that families are much more likely to support donation when the individual's positive decision is known beforehand. Declaring your decision by signing the NHS Organ Donor Register and discussing your end-of-life decision with those closest to you will ease the burden families face and make it more likely that they will support your decision to be a donor.

Since the change in organ donation legislation, opt-in registrations on the NHS Organ Donation Register have steadily increased to more than 28 million people in the UK, which is encouraging and shows that the organ donation message is clearly making its way into people's conscious. However, legislation could never be the sole answer to improving organ donation, transplant, and consent rates, rather it's a piece of the whole jigsaw. We continually develop regular training programmes for our specialist nurses who work closely with bereaved families. Acting with our partners and communities we strive to deliver empowering initiatives which motivate individuals to register their decision, which in turn will hopefully convert positive decisions into lifesaving donations.

The biggest success of last year was the number of lung transplants carried out. There was a 39% increase in the total number of lung or heart-lung transplants in 2023/24. 18% of these were urgent lung transplants, 1% were super-urgent, and 78% were non-urgent, meaning 140 patients received a lifesaving transplant. This was due, in part, to the coming together of the lung transplant clinical community and stakeholders at a Lung Summit to discuss and activate new ways of working to maximise the opportunity for donation and utilisation of lungs for transplant.

The number of patients donating after brain stem death (DBD) remained the same, while patients donating after circulatory death (DCD) increased by 12% in 2023/24. This shift in emphasis poses its own challenges in terms of the type and quality of organs that can be donated. There is mounting evidence that perfusion technologies, can maintain donated organs outside the body, assess viability of the organ and potentially offer a way to repair and recover donated organs in the future. These technologies give surgeons greater confidence to transplant more organs successfully. The facilitation of heart transplants via such technology is another huge success story. Last year (2023/24) there were 65 DCD heart transplants, 10 more than the previous year. The development of these and other projects is the goal of renewed collaborations with our NHS partners.



Living donation makes an invaluable contribution each year in providing people in need of kidney and liver transplants the chance at a new life. However, the number of living donors decreased by 2% to 938 last year, accounting for 38% of the total number of organ donors.

Last year there was an increase of 9% in the total number of corneas retrieved to NHSBT Eye Banks (5,152) and the number of corneal transplants increased by 11% to 4,165.

We are in touching distance of getting organ donation and transplantation back to pre-pandemic levels and remain committed to giving excellent care for every potential donor and their family and maximising the successful transplantation of all available organs. This will only be possible through the continued hard work and dedication of all those involved in donation, retrieval, and transplantation and with the support of donors and their families, so that together we can save and improve lives both now and in the future.



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