

Board Meeting in Public

Tuesday, 02 December 2025

Title of Paper	Health of the Donor base – NHS Organ Donor Register	Agenda No.	3.5.2
Nature of Paper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Official Sensitive		
Author(s)	Danielle Pettitt – Assistant Director - Strategic Operations, Donor Experience		
Lead Executive	Mark Chambers – Director, Donor Experience		
Non-Executive Director Sponsor	N/A		
Presenter(s) at Meeting	Mark Chambers and Danielle Pettitt		
Presented for	<input type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assurance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Update		
Is there a plan to communicate this to the organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yet to be determined		
Executive Summary			
<p>At the April Board meeting on the Health of the Donor Base we agreed to come back 6 months later with an update on our efforts to grow and diversify the NHS Organ Donor Register (which holds individuals' decisions for both organs and tissues). This paper has been pulled together in collaboration with colleagues across the organisation and should be seen as our collective view.</p> <p>In this paper we will outline a summary of the current state of the NHS Organ Donor Register before going into more detail around successes and challenges in the last 6 months, as well as activity, both planned and underway, that we believe will enable us to grow and diversify the NHS Organ Donor Register. We will outline our ambition and why it is so important, the risks we face and our ask of the Board.</p> <p>Organ donation remains a critical priority for NHSBT. Despite the introduction of deemed / authorised consent across the UK, consent rates have declined and optout registrations have risen. Family support for donation is significantly higher when a patient's decision is known, highlighting the importance of increasing opt-in registrations. We are on track to meet our target for opt-in registrations for the year but this needs to significantly increase going forwards.</p> <p>The ambition is clear: to achieve 70% of the UK population recording an opt-in decision, equating to around 20 million additional registrations, which will enable us to deliver more transplants and reverse the trend of an increasing transplant waiting list. Achieving this requires urgent action through innovative partnerships and investment in marketing and digital pathways.</p>			
Previously Considered by			
Board meeting – 1 st April 2025			
Recommendation			
We would like the Board to endorse our ambition and support the sourcing of increased investment to drive significant Register growth.			
Risk(s) identified (Link to Board Assurance Framework Risks)			
P-04 Donor diversity and numbers. P-02 Service Disruption P-06 Clinical Outcomes and Health Inequalities			

Strategic Objective(s) this paper relates to:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Modernise our operations	<input type="checkbox"/> Invest in people and culture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grow and diversify our donor base <input type="checkbox"/> Drive innovation
Appendices:	Appendix A,B,C,D and E attached.

1.0 Executive summary

Currently there are c8k people on the transplant waiting list that we are unable to support with the transplant they need. Transplant need has increased by over a third since 2020 due to growing prevalence of organ failure, and we expect demand to continue to rise, especially for kidneys. Furthermore we need 70 cornea donors a week to meet demand and currently average only 60 donors per week and the demand for other tissues is growing.

The NHS Organ Donor Register (ODR) is fundamental to enabling us to have sufficient donors to meet demand. Deemed consent should be the exception with opt-in consent (expressed consent) preferred, as this approach is crucial as it ensures we get the families support for donation. Where opt in consent is given, 90% of families support the decision, whereas where consent is unknown it drops to 49%. Overall consent rates have fallen from 69% (2020/21) to 61% (2024/25).

We have seen increased numbers opting-in this financial year, mainly driven by partnerships such as the DVLA, Passport Service and the NHS App, alongside awareness activity like Organ Donation Week, and we are currently on track to meet our end-of-year target. However, to support our desire to give every patient the donation they need, we need to significantly increase the number of opt-in registrations on the ODR. Our ambition is to increase our opt-in registrations to 70% of the UK population, however this requires us to think very differently going forwards and will necessitate more investment.

2.0 NHS Organ Donor Register summary

Overall ODR base (Sept): 28.6m opt-in registrations (42% of the UK population) and 2.8m opt-out registrations on the ODR (4.2% of the UK population).

General growth rate: Since 2019/20 we have seen the annual number of first-time opt-in registrations fall due to the ending of the Boots and GP partnerships as well as the introduction of the law change in England which may have caused apathy with the public. In 2019/20 we saw 1 million first time opt-in registrations - this had decreased by 27% to 727k registrations in 2024/25.

Demographic disparities: While we do not have comprehensive data we see older age groups (50–80) and lower socio-economic groups are under-represented on the ODR but over-represented in eligible deaths. Black and Asian heritage groups remain under-represented despite higher transplant need.

Growth this year (April – September 2025):

- Since the start of this financial year our ODR opt-in base has increased by 1.1%, and our opt-out base has increased by 3.7%.
- Year to date 494k people have registered a decision for the first-time (opt-in or opt-out) vs 425k in the same period last year.
- Opt-outs have risen sharply in the last year, with a 130% increase in the last 6 months compared to the same period in the previous year.
- We are currently year to date running at 97% of our UK annual target of 750k for opt-in registrations.

2.1 NHS Organ Donor Register – successes from the last 6 months

Organ Donation Week - Included widespread media coverage, paid advertising, engaging 1.9m NHS staff via Organ Donation Committees, and amplification by partners / stakeholders. We saw during September an increase in people visiting our website, dwell time and a 5% uplift in first-time opt-in registrations compared to the monthly average year to date (from all registration sources).

Organ Donation Joint Working Group - A joint working group was created to identify opportunities across the whole donation pathway to improve consent and included an action forum with international experts – key recommendations are being taken forwards.

DVLA - This continues to drive c.80% of opt-in registrations (and is an important conduit for young adults). Year to date (Apr-Sep) is 315k first-time opt-ins and 1.1m repeat opt-ins.

NHS App optimisation - Early results show significant uplift with ODR service user volumes doubled.

Passport Service - Piloting an organ donation pathway which has seen strong growth, generating 25k registrations of which 3k are first-time opt-in registrations, year to date (April-Sept).

GPs - API Service Integration agreed within the new GP Registration customer journey that supports 3.4million transactions annually and work is now underway to support this.

Resource - Since appointing a new Marketing Manager for Wales, and in collaboration with the PR team, we achieved more PR coverage for Organ Donation Week than we have seen previously.

2.2 NHS Organ Donor Register – challenges faced

Increase in opt-out registrations - Since October 2024 there has been a significant increase in first-time opt-out registrations. In the last 6 months (April – Sept), there has been a 130% rise in first-time opt-out decisions being recorded on the ODR compared to the same period the previous year (116k vs 50k), in part driven by negative media stories. Just 4.1% of the UK population have registered an opt-out decision.

Opt-out legislation - Customer insight shows that the public believe they no longer need to take action now that it is an opt-out system for organ donation.

Support and trust - Public support has declined (from 80% in 2018 to 72% in 2023). This coincides with the declining satisfaction and mistrust in the NHS, which may be impacting willingness to register.

Budget - There is a baseline annual budget of c.£700k for marketing which impacts on our ability to reach our priority audience at the scale and frequency required to have significant impact. There is currently no specific funding to support partnerships and only £85k for technical development support.

2.3 NHS Organ Donor Register – activity to grow the Register

Strategy creation - Following on from a recent workshop, and in line with the Organ Donation Joint Working Group recommendations, a new overarching and integrated strategy will be developed for marketing, communications and engagement. A comms plan is also in development for ongoing support for cornea donation.

Relationship marketing

- A CRM strategy is being developed to identify how to build ongoing relationships with organ donation registrants in order to retain them and encourage registrants to share their consent and get friends/family members to register on the ODR. We also are investigating how we can help blood donation recruitment through the ODR.
- We are working with the DVLA (our largest contributor to the ODR) to receive email addresses to enable us to confirm registration and that will be integrated with our Marketing Automation Tool in place of sending physical mailings and will save costs.

Community engagement – We will continue to use our Community Grants Programme partners to educate around organ donation within the Black heritage and ethnic minority communities and look to understand if we can do more to promote organ donation at blood recruitment events.

Passport Service – We estimate this delivers approximately 6k first-time opt-in registrations per year.

DVLA digital pathway – Delivers approximately 610k first-time opt-in registrations and 2.2m repeat opt-in registrations per year. We anticipate a similar figure of c610k registrations through DVLA this year.

NHS Apps – The NHS England App provides approximately 35k first-time opt-in registrations per year. We anticipate the front-page campaign will deliver approximately 50k additional first-time opt-in registrations. We anticipate the NHS Wales App will provide an additional c3.5k first-time opt-in registrations.

Digital improvements

- NHS Wales 'welcome' email will go to all app registrants, replacing physical letters and serving as an initial 'proof of concept' for future email communications.
- MyCare Scotland – we are exploring a strategic partnership to embed organ donation within the new national health and social care digital app, scheduled for rollout from April 2026.
- Re-platforming the registration forms on the organs website to improve user experience.
- Planning an organs website improvement project starting with a content audit.
- App campaign (early Dec) where all users will see prompt to sign / re-sign the ODR.
- Plans to integrate with the NHS Login and GOV.UK One Login authentication services, to promote the opportunity to confirm an ODR decision at the end of other GOV.UK services, as well as add a personalised pink donor card within the GOV.UK wallet - estimated 2.7million users daily.

2.4 NHS Organ Donor Register - Ambition

While the activity planned this year is forecasted to grow the size of the ODR to 28.8m (42.2% of the UK population)* there is still considerable growth needed to increase the number of transplants and save even more lives. Every 100k registrations results in 1 extra consented donor every year. *(It should be noted that the projected growth accounts for opt-in registrations and removals due to deaths.)

We intend to raise opt-ins to 70% of the UK population (~20m additional registrations) - this would deliver ~250 more deceased donors and ~625 transplants annually. In order to make a sizeable shift in the percentage of the UK population recording an opt-in decision we will need to transform from our current operating model:

- **Strategy:** The Joint working group laid out a clear vision of how we need to progress, with the need for a bold, innovative strategy sat at the heart of it – work is already underway to deliver this before the end of the financial year.
- **Partnerships:** We will need to further expand our partnerships digital pathways activity to secure more registrations at scale such as through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Home Office. If we are able to fund resource and technical infrastructure, we anticipate that working with NHS Login/GOV.UK One Login partners and GP registration that it could bring an additional 650k-1.1m in additional first-time registrations by the end of 2028/29.
- **Digital & technology investment:** To benefit from the significant external partnership opportunities we will need to invest in digital and technology. This will allow the ODR to integrate with external public services such as NHS England's Register with my GP service, federated authentication opportunities such as NHS Login, Government One Login and Wallet and embed the opportunity to

confirm an organ donation decision within high traffic government services such as the State Pension and Child Benefit Services. NHSBT's organ donation website and registration journey require significant modernisation and is a key dependency to support these endeavours.

- **Marketing:** We will need to consider using potentially more disruptive communications and focus on encouraging opt-in registrations from core audiences. Deemed consent has created public apathy with many believing no action is required. Black and Asian heritage groups remain under-represented despite higher transplant need, so we will also need to consider how to successfully engage these audiences and overcome mistrust in the NHS.
- **Education:** We will need to secure investment for resource to build relationships with relevant Government departments and examination boards to ensure the teaching of donation is prioritised in schools in order to reach our ODR numbers in the future.

2.5 NHS Organ Donor Register – Risks

- **Budget:** When the law changed in England there was significant investment to educate the public. Since then the budget has decreased - the current budget (£0.7m annually) is insufficient to deliver the scale of activity required so we will need to secure investment for increased marketing activity. Without additional investment our ambitions will stall and we will be faced with continued inability to meet organ and tissue transplantation demand.
- **Rising opt-outs:** Continued growth in opt-out registrations could offset gains in opt-ins and reduce overall consent rates. Root causes need to be understood and mitigation put in place.
- **Shortfall:** continuing the approach we have been taken will not deliver the required numbers of registrations required to address the persistent gap between demand and the supply of organs which risks undermining clinical outcomes.

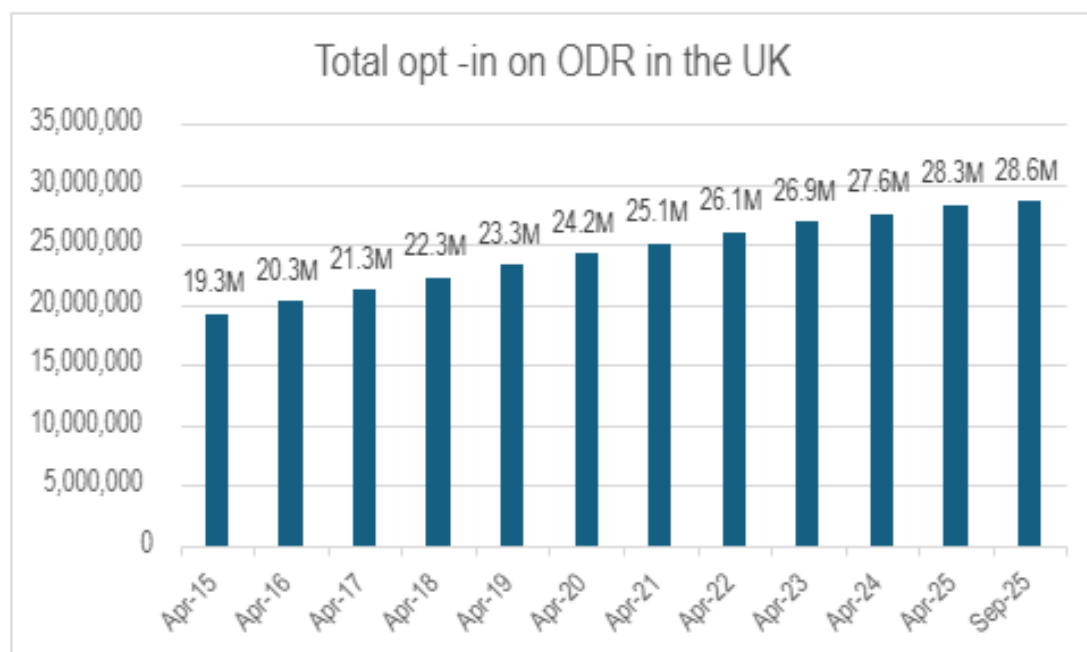
2.6 NHS Organ Donor Register – the ask of the Board

The Board is asked to:

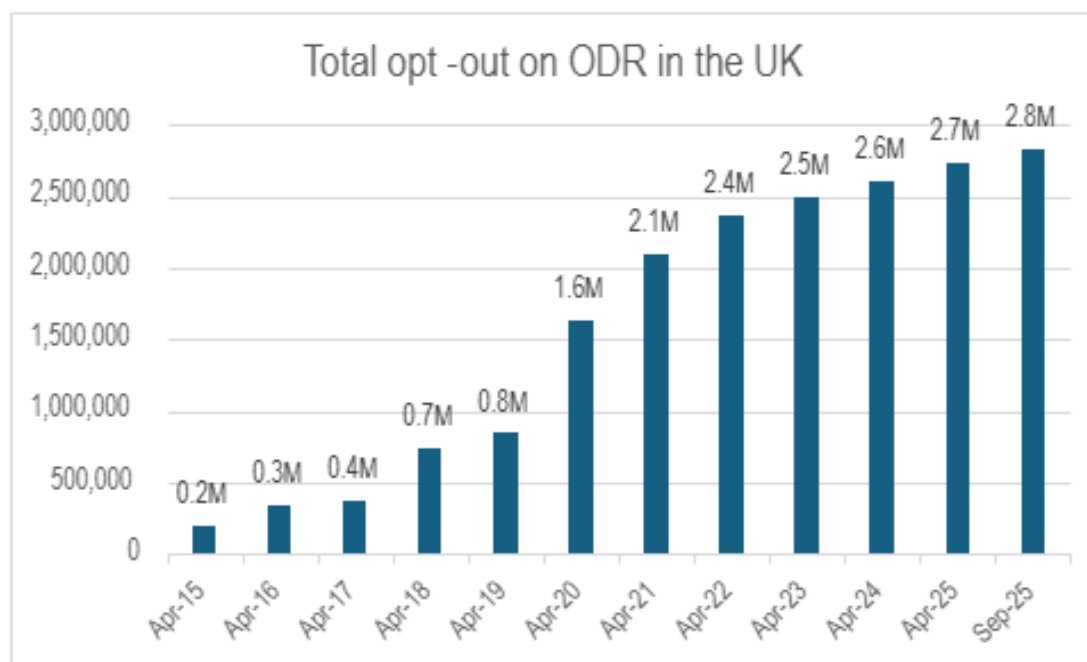
- Endorse the ambition to achieve 70% of the UK population recording an opt-in decision.
- Approve the proposed integrated strategy for organs and tissues once completed.
- Support the case to source increased investment to accelerate growth by approximately 20m additional registrations.
- Back the exploration of disruptive communications and expanded partnerships with government and healthcare services to drive opt-in registrations.

APPENDICES

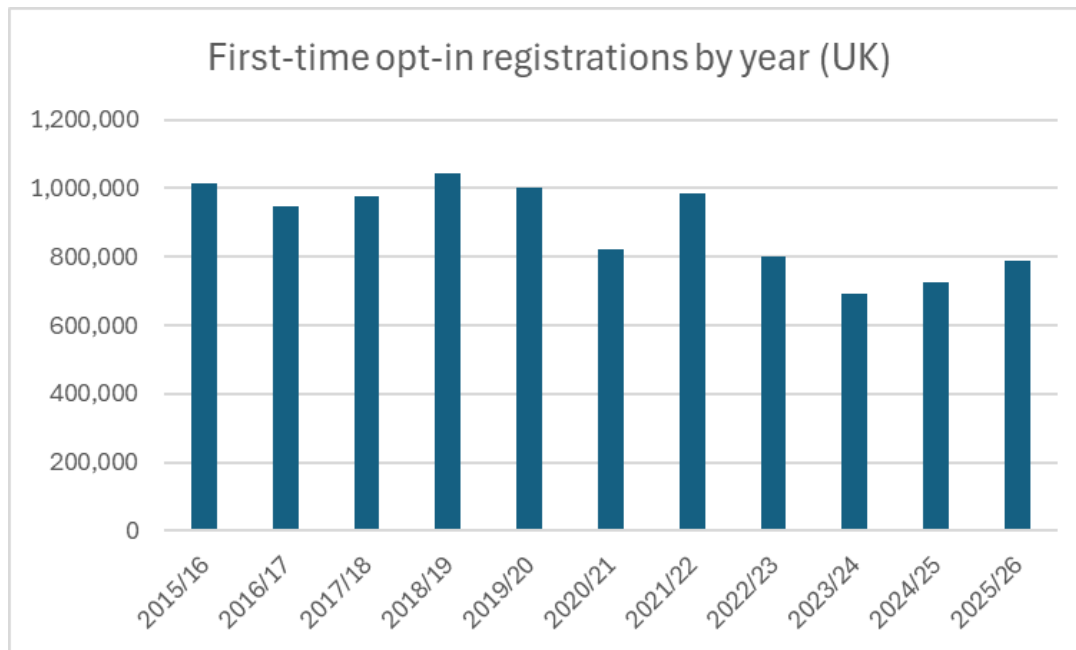
Appendix A: Opt-in registration growth



Appendix B: Opt-in registration growth



Appendix C: First time opt-in registrations



Appendix D: First time opt-in registrations and projection by channel



Appendix E: Future partnership activity (anticipated registrations to be delivered if supported with funding)

Forecast: New and Emerging ODR Partnership Activity

FY	Activity	First Ever Registration Uplift Forecast	Uplift to Target 25/26 750,000
25/26	NHS App Front Page Tile (3-month campaign)	50,000 (Potentially up to 100,000 – NHSE's first in App journey campaign, no baseline data)	Target to date – 730,000 Uplift – 780,000
	One Login - Build phase	N/A	
26/27	Register with a GP (launched mid year)	50,000	Uplift – 830,000
	One Login/Govt Partners – Build phase	N/A	
27/28	Register with a GP	150,000	Uplift – 1,080,000
	One Login/Govt Partners – end of year benefit	100,000	
28/29	Register with a GP	150,000	Uplift – 1,430,000 to 1,730,000
	One Login/Govt Partners	200,000 to 500,000	

(Delivery will be jointly led by the ODR and Partnership teams)
(Activity is subject to funded resourcing and technical infrastructure)

