

NHSBT press essentials on the English Opt Out Consultation

Press queries on the consultation

- NHS Blood and Transplant is responsible for the operational delivery of deceased organ donation in the UK. NHSBT will provide evidence to the consultation but is not responsible for the consultation or for legislation. Contact NHS Blood and Transplant Press Office on 01923 367 600 and pressoffice@nhsbt.nhs.uk For out of hours enquiries please call 0117 969 2444
- The Department of Health is responsible for the consultation and legislation in England. For press queries, contact the Department of Health Global and Public Health team. Contact details are at <https://healthmedia.blog.gov.uk/contact/>
- The Welsh Government's health department is responsible for queries on the deemed consent legislation in Wales. For press queries, contact 03000 255962 and welshgovernmentnews@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Consultation essentials

The Government is carrying out a consultation over its intention to introduce a deemed consent (or opt out) system in England. Organ donation legislation is a matter for the health departments of the four country Governments.

The consultation started in December and is due to run for a period of three months. NHS Blood and Transplant would be responsible for implementing any agreed change of policy once the consultation has concluded.

Donation essentials

The UK has a UK-wide organ donation and transplantation system. Organs donated in any part of the UK can be transplanted into patients in other parts of the UK.

Although registering a decision to donate is a legally valid decision it is not mandatory to take your organs so, in practice if your family strongly feel they cannot

support this, donation doesn't go ahead. Family support is sought out of respect for the family and to help source important information on the donor's lifestyle and travel history.

The decision to list a patient for transplantation is usually taken at a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting at a hospital transplant centre. The criteria for listing patients are developed by organ-specific advisory groups, which are managed by NHSBT. Donated organs are offered to transplant centres through a complex system of policies to ensure equity and fairness. Organs need to be transplanted within hours of donation.

Patients from Black and Asian communities are more likely to need an organ transplant than the rest of the population as they are more susceptible to illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension, which can result in organ failure. People from the same ethnic background are more likely to be a match for transplants. However only 35% of Black and Asian people in the UK agreed to donation last year, compared to a population average of 63%.

People in the 70s and 80s have gone to save and improve lives through organ donation. The average age of a deceased organ donor was 51 in 2016/17.

The top 6 things we see the public and media get wrong

'You need a donor card to donate in England'

An Organ Donor Card is a great way to show you're committed to saving lives. However, you don't need to carry an organ donor card for your organs to be donated, as medical staff will always consult the NHS Organ Donor Register and speak to your family.

'You need to be on the NHS Organ Donor Register to donate in England'

You don't have to have registered a decision to donate on the NHS Organ Donor Register to become a donor but it makes things easier for your family. If you haven't made a decision your family will be asked to make it for you. You make things easier for them at a difficult time by joining the NHS Organ Donor Register and telling your family you want to donate.

'Organs donated in Wales stay in Wales'

The UK has a UK-wide organ donation and transplantation system. Organs donated in any part of the UK can be transplanted into patients in other parts of the UK. Patients resident in one UK country can also be listed for transplant at a transplant centre in another UK country. This system makes the best and fairest use of organs.

Organ allocation policies are developed by advisory groups made up of members of the transplant community, in discussion with professional bodies, patient groups, and charities.

‘Families are not asked about donation under ‘opt out’ systems’

The role of families in the donation process is crucial as they can help with important information not found in their relative’s medical records, for example their life style and travel history.

This information is vital to make sure that donation and transplantation of organs offered by donors and their families is as safe as possible. Respect for the donor and their family and the safety of transplant recipients is paramount.

Specialist Nurses in Organ Donation always involve families in organ donation conversations for the same reasons. In Wales, the family can also help determine important information about deemed consent donors, such as where they live and whether they had ever objected to donation.

Some opt out systems include a family veto and others do not. Under some systems the decision whether to accept a family veto is decided on a case by case basis.

Regardless of which system is in place, it would still be very important to tell your family of your organ donation decision. This is because it makes things easier for your family at a difficult time. It also helps ensure that your family are clear about what you want and that your decision to donate is respected.

‘There can’t be a shortage of donors when there are 24m people on the NHS Organ Donor Register’

Around 500,000 people who die every year in the UK, but only around 1% (5,000) of them die in circumstances where they are able to donate their organs. Organs can only be transplanted very soon after someone has died and they need to be in a usable condition. Donors can usually only be people who are certified dead in a hospital intensive care unit. Because of these constraints, every potential donor is precious.

‘I’m too old to donate, no one will want my organs’

Age is no barrier to joining the NHS Organ Donor Register. People in the 70s and 80s have gone to save and improve lives through organ donation. People who are even older have helped transform lives through tissue donation. Medical professionals will make the decision. The average age of a deceased organ donor in 2016/17 was 51.

Resources

Where can I get videos?

- Our Youtube channel has a large selection of videos and is here <https://www.youtube.com/user/nhsorgandonation>

Where I get organ donation logos?

- There are a variety of organ donation logos here <https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/news-and-campaigns/downloads/>

Where can I get statistics?

- We've compiled key statistics here – open up the below text box.

Key recent statistics on organ donation (December 2017)

- We also publish statistics here <https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/supporting-my-decision/statistics-about-organ-donation/>

Do you have a stock photo we can use?



- NHS Organ Donor Card
- Organ transport box in an operating theatre
- Specialist Nurse in Organ Donation Mark Caroe with hundreds of empty organ and tissue transport boxes, representing the hundreds of potential transplants missed every year when families say no to donation.

Where can I get more information?

- For more information on organ donation and to join the NHS Organ Donor Register visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk
- For more medical information on organ donation visit our clinical site www.odt.nhs.uk
- For more information on the consultation visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>

NHS Blood and Transplant and the consultation

What is NHS Blood and Transplant?

NHS Blood and Transplant is a joint England and Wales Special Health Authority. We are responsible for ensuring a safe and efficient supply of blood and associated services to the NHS in England. We are also the organ donation organisation for the UK and are responsible for matching and allocating donated organs.

What is NHSBT's role in the consultation?

The Department of Health is responsible for the English opt out consultation. During the consultation, NHS Blood and Transplant's role is to provide a reliable source of information to the public, and to continue to promote organ donation and the importance of family conversations. NHS Blood and Transplant will provide evidence as required to the consultation on organ donation policies and procedures, operational work and statistics, barriers and advances, and on how different organ donation legislation systems could be implemented in practice.

What is NHS Blood and Transplant's position on the consultation? Are you in favour of opt out?

We welcome the Government's commitment to the lifesaving power of organ donation, which is demonstrated by their desire to hold a consultation into an opt out system. We support any initiative which leads to more organ donors and more lives being saved. We hope it will ensure that everyone makes a decision about organ donation, and that their decision is respected.

We hope people will take time to think about organ donation, make a decision about what they want, and if they want to donate, to sign up to the NHS Organ Donor Register and discuss their decision with their family so that their intention to give the gift of life after death is fully understood. We also hope people will join the national conversation about organ donation the consultation brings.