

# YOU COULD BE A LIFESAVER

Organ donation law is changing in spring 2023, find out more



The Public Health Agency (PHA) is encouraging people to sign up to the NHS Organ Donation Register as well as raising awareness of the new opt-out law surrounding organ donation in NI coming into place in spring 2023.

Organ donation is when one person chooses to give an organ or tissue to save or improve the life of someone else. This is often called giving the 'gift of life'. In Northern Ireland over 130 people are currently waiting for an organ, but while 90% of people in Northern Ireland support organ donation, only 52% of people have registered their decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register. To donate organs after death, a person needs to die in hospital in specific circumstances. This applies to only 1 in every 100 people, making every registration and family conversation vital.

Over 6,000 people in the UK currently need a transplant, and of these, nearly 400 people die waiting each year because there are not enough organs available. Last year (2021/22) in Northern Ireland, 55 families supported the gift of organ donation, which enabled 127 life-saving transplants across the UK. Organ donation is a most precious gift and the selfless act of donors and their families is at the heart of organ donation. 100 lives in Northern Ireland were saved and transformed through organ donation in 2021, however, there are around 122 people awaiting a transplant, waiting for the call to give them 'the gift of life'.

The Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, to be known as 'Dáithí's Law', received Royal Assent in March 2022. Named after 5-year-old organ donation campaigner Dáithí Mac Gabhann, who has been awaiting the gift of a new heart for nearly 4 years, the new law will change the system of organ donation in Northern Ireland to an opt-out system. This means, in the event that organ donation is a possibility after you die, it will be considered that all adults agree to being an organ donor unless they choose to opt out or are in an excluded group\*. The best way to opt out is by registering a decision [not to donate on the NHS Organ Donor Register](#)

Under the new law, it will be considered that you agree to donate your organs and tissue when you die, unless you have confirmed otherwise, or are from one of the excluded groups.

Excluded groups include:

- Those under the age of 18
- People who lack the mental capacity to understand the change in law
- Visitors to Northern Ireland
- Temporary residents

You still have the choice about whether or not you want to become a donor. Your family will continue to be consulted, and decisions based on faith and belief will continue to be respected.



A public information campaign is helping to raise awareness of the law change, as well as reinforcing the importance of sharing organ donation decisions. Should the worst happen, families find the organ donation conversation much easier if they already know what their relative would have wanted. Only half of families agree to organ donation going ahead if they don't know their loved ones' decision, but this rises to 9 out of 10 if the family has had a conversation.

You can join the NHS Organ Donor Register by filling in a form online at [www.organdonationni.info](http://www.organdonationni.info) or by calling the NHS Donor Line on 0300 123 2323.

You can also join when you are registering for a driving licence, applying for a Boots Advantage Card, or registering for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

Commonly asked questions about organ donation and more information about the law change can be found on [About donation \(organdonationni.info\)](http://About%20donation%20(organdonationni.info))

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