

[News story: Health secretary urges people to talk to each other about organ donation](#)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has asked people to overcome their reluctance to talk about organ donation with relatives, as he launches [a public consultation on a new opt-out system](#).

Figures from NHS Blood and Transplant show that in the past year around 1,100 families in the UK decided not to allow organ donation because they did not know whether their relatives would have wanted it.

In October, the Prime Minister announced a change to an 'opt-out' system, that would shift the balance of presumption in favour of organ donation.

At present, 80% of people say they would be willing to donate their organs, but only 36% register to become an organ donor.

It is hoped that changing the system to an opt-out model of consent will mean more viable organs become available for use on the NHS, potentially saving thousands of lives.

Over the next 3 months, the government is asking for comments on the defining questions of the new system:

- How much say should families have in their deceased relative's decision to donate their organs?
- When would exemptions to 'opt-out' be needed, and what safeguards will be necessary?
- How might a new system affect certain groups depending on age, disability, race or faith?

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Every day, 3 people die for want of a transplant, which is why our historic plans to transform the way organ donation works are so important. We want as many people as possible to have their say as we shape the new opt-out process.

But as well as changing the law, we also need to change the conversation. It can be a difficult subject to broach, but overcoming this fatal reluctance to talk openly about our wishes is key to saving many more lives in the future.

Only about half of adults on the current organ register say they have discussed their wishes with a relative.

Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation, said:

The government's commitment to an opt-out system is a commitment to ending the pain felt by families who risk losing a loved one while they wait for an organ. There is a desperate shortage of organ donors in the UK, but around 8 in 10 of us say we do want to donate our organs.

Introducing an opt-out system in England will mean more people get the life-saving heart transplant they need. In the meantime, it's still important for all of us to have conversations with our loved ones about organ donation so our wishes can be met if the worst should happen.

Fiona Loud, Director of Policy at Kidney Care UK, said:

With 8 out of 10 people on the transplant list hoping for a kidney and at least one person dying every day while waiting, this consultation is a unique chance to change this. Whatever your views are on organ donation, please share them.

It's a good time to make sure your loved ones know how you feel too because currently we have one of the lowest rates of consent to donation in Europe.