

Organ donation consent rates in Wales highest in the UK

The donation after circulatory death (DCD) consent rate in Wales has also improved and is now 68% compared to England 59.8%.

Wales now has the highest combined DBD and DCD consent rate in the UK at 80.5%, when compared to England (66.2%), Scotland (63.6%) and Northern Ireland (66.7).

On 1 December 2015, Wales became the first country in the UK to move to a soft opt-out system of consent to organ donation. This means that if a person has not registered a decision to become an organ donor (opted in) or a decision not to become an organ donor (opted out), they will be considered as having no objection to being an organ donor – this is known as deemed consent.

NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) have been undertaking an analysis of the effect of Welsh Legislation on consent/authorisation rates since 1 January 2016. They have collected cumulative data on consent rates in Wales compared to England.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Every organ donation is an invaluable, potentially life-giving gift. These new figures are a real cause for optimism and another indicator our pioneering legislation is having the effect we hoped it would and is helping deliver real improvements for Wales.

“None of what we have achieved would have been possible without the support of the Welsh population and the healthcare professionals involved in making this a success. I thank them all for getting behind this and am keen to see if these increases are sustained.”

Chief Medical Officer Dr Frank Atherton said:

“These are encouraging figures but we must continue the good work to further increase organ donation here in Wales.

“We must always be mindful that the numbers in Wales are small and we have to wait to see if these increases are sustained. We cannot definitely say this is solely down to our organ donation legislation but I think it is reasonable to believe that it must have contributed to it, together with better public awareness and good clinical practice.

“We know awareness and understanding is increasing, but it is

really important we continue to reach the Welsh public on this issue. It's really important that we keep the momentum going and I urge everyone to take a moment and have a conversation with their loved ones about their organ donation decision.

"If you know you want to be an organ donor, then simply tell your loved ones. Your family will be involved in any discussions about organ donation if you are in a position to donate your organs when you die. Never having discussed organ donation could make an already difficult time more stressful for families."