

Welsh Government launch first Organ Donation pack for secondary Schools.

The pack, which was first tested with pupils there, will help inform key stage 3 and 4 students about organ donation, encouraging them to discuss the subject with their friends and families.

The lesson guide is the result of collaboration between the Welsh Government and NHS Blood and Transplant, and contains a lesson plan, activities, short case study films and guidance for teachers.

The pack aims to encourage pupils to:

- Describe how organ donation saves and improves lives;
- Explain some of the reasons why people decide to become organ and tissue donors;
- Understand why it is important to join the NHS Organ Donor Register;
- Understand how to talk to people about organ and tissue donation;
- Understand what options about donating they must consider under the system in Wales;
- Understand the decision to donate is their own, and the importance of sharing that decision.

In 2015 Wales was the first country in the UK to move to a soft opt-out system of consent to organ donation. The latest statistics reveal a 72% consent rate and approximately 24.3 donors per million population, putting Wales at the top of the list in the UK.

Statistics also show that 39% of the Welsh population have registered to opt-in to donate their organs following their death. However, if individuals don't tell their family of their decision to donate, the family may not honour that decision and over-ride the organ donor registration or not support deemed consent.

In 2016-17 data published by NHS Blood and Transplant showed there were 21 cases in Wales where families either overrode their relatives' decisions to donate organs, or didn't support the deemed consent.

With an average of 3.1 organs retrieved per donor in Wales in 2016-17, this could have resulted in as many as 65 additional transplants.

The Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Dr Frank Atherton said:

“Encouraging an open and honest discussion about organ donation is key to increasing the number of people who consent to donating their organs, and more importantly, that families understand and respect their loved one's wishes.

“It's important that children and young people are given as much

information as possible, in a sensitive and engaging way, so they can make an informed decision about organ donation and encouraging their families to have the chat at home.

To make sure the pack worked in practice, it was piloted at Penyrheol Comprehensive school by PSE Coordinator Hayley Steel before being rolled out. She said:

“Having the chance to test something as important as the school pack on organ donation was a huge honour. It’s been good to see the feedback from our session help shape the pack to what it is today.

“The pupils responded so well to the activities; we shouldn’t forget that young people have the capacity to understand and discuss these huge life questions. I believe it will benefit other schools across Wales, helping to break away from some of the stigma that surrounds discussing organ donation.”

Nadine Marshall, whose son Conner tragically died following an attack in 2015, features in one of the case study films. Nadine said:

“I think it’s really important young people are listened to and given the opportunity to talk about organ donation at school and college. It’s also important people talk to their loved ones about it so families are aware of their decision, should they find themselves in that incredibly difficult situation.

“Conner was only 16 when he made his decision to be an organ donor and I am grateful we had talked about it and were aware of how strongly he felt about being a donor.

“He has given an incredible gift and we were able to do what Conner would have wanted by supporting his decision.”