

Public urged to discuss organ donation with family

✖ Even if you have already joined the NHS Organ Donor Register you are encouraged to talk to your nearest and dearest about your wishes on organ donation.

NHS Lothian now boasts the highest percentage of sign-ups in the country, with almost half the community registering their wish to be an organ donor.

However, although many think joining the NHS Organ Donor Register is enough, sharing organ donation wishes remains fundamental to relatives honouring a loved one's choices in the event of their death.

The call comes as research shows that almost half of people in Scotland haven't discussed their organ donation wishes with their family, and one in ten of those who are on the NHS Organ Donor Register haven't spoken to loved ones about their decision.

Since 2010/11, the family authorisation rate for organ donation – when a family member agrees that donation can proceed – has gone up to 61.6 per cent, but if the rate was to further increase to 80 per cent, then around 90 more lives could be saved each year.

With around 550 people in Scotland currently waiting on a life-saving organ, the Organ Donation Scotland campaign is highlighting how the seven words, 'I'd like to be an organ donor' can save up to seven lives.

Professor Stephen Wigmore, Clinical Director of Transplantation, NHS Lothian, said: "It is important to discuss this topic, as the more people that are on the Organ Donor Register, the better chance we have of saving lives.

“People should talk about their wishes for organ donation with their families. Having this conversation could help the many people who are waiting to receive an organ.”

Minister for Public Health, Maureen Watt, said: “Scotland has made huge progress in organ donation and transplantation, and it’s fantastic that 41 per cent of Scots have expressed their wish to donate their organs by joining the NHS Organ Donor Register. The message we want to get across is that it’s vital people talk about their organ donation wishes with friends and family, even if they have joined the Register, so these wishes can be honoured.

“Your family are twice as likely to agree to donation if they know it’s what you would have wanted and we know that in the last five years, almost two thirds of those who donated their organs weren’t on the Register. With many Scots currently waiting on a transplant, making time for a ‘wee chat’ could ultimately save lives.”

Transplant recipient Gill Hollis, from Edinburgh, has backed the campaign to get Scotland talking about organ donation.

Gill, 49, received a lung transplant in 2004 after living with a progressive lung disease for more than 15 years. By the time she was listed for transplant, every single breath was a struggle.

Gill said: “I wouldn’t be here without the NHS Organ Donor Register and the young woman who made the selfless decision to sign up. I also owe my life to her family, who made the brave decision to allow her to become a donor in what must have been their most difficult hour. So I would urge everyone to chat over with their family their wishes should the unthinkable happen.”

Join the NHS Organ Donor Register by visiting organdonationscotland.org

