

Scottish Government acting on organ donation



The current system of organ donation by registering in advance is not without problems.

The Scottish Government aims to increase the number of organs available for donation by introducing a 'workable soft opt-out system'.

A new Member's Bill was about to be debated at Holyrood, but the government lodged an amendment to offer a consultation ahead of legislating in this area itself.

Minister for Public Health, Maureen Watt, said:

"We've worked hard to deliver a range of measures that have resulted in significant increases in the availability of organs for transplantation.

"Since 2008, we have seen an 82 per cent increase in the number of deceased organ donors in Scotland; a 42 per cent increase in the number of transplants undertaken; and a 21 per cent reduction in the active transplant waiting list.

"But while we're very supportive of measures to increase organ availability, in our view the Member's Bill before the Scottish Parliament is seriously flawed and could actually harm organ donation.

"Many of the measures set out in the Bill could make things worse due to legal ambiguities and delays in decision-making processes. We have concerns that the proposals around authorised investigating persons (AIPs) and proxies will add significant complexity into the donation pathway, and may lead to potential donors being lost.

“We also have concerns that provisions in relation to adults with incapacity may make it difficult for such adults, or their relatives, to opt-out, leaving them ‘locked in’ to donation.

“However, this Bill has helped to raise the profile of the debate about how we can increase the number of organ donors – bringing these important issues to the fore. What is clear is that both the public and MSPs share a desire to look again at what more can be done to help the hundreds of people that are waiting for a life-saving transplant in Scotland each year.

“That is why we propose starting work now on a detailed consultation to look at the best methods of achieving this in the next parliament. The consultation will be an opportunity to seek the views of the public on a range of issues, including soft opt-out, and determine what action the Scottish Government should take next to increase the availability of organs.”