

Public Health Shropshire is undertaking a research project to find out the views of people in Shropshire about organ and tissue donation.

During a full Council meeting in late 2013 at Shropshire Council, there was a debate which centred on the current England 'opt-in' policy. As a result of the debate the Health and Wellbeing Board were asked to gather the views of Shropshire residents on the topic of organ and tissue donation.

If the majority response is for the organ and tissue donation policy to stay the same, no action will be taken. However, if the majority response is for the organ and tissue donation policy to move to an 'opt in' policy, this outcome may be used to lobby central government for a change in policy.

The outcomes of this research will be published during autumn 2014

What is organ and tissue donation?

Organ and tissue donation is the gift of an organ (e.g. heart, lungs or kidneys) or soft tissue such as corneas (the transparent front part of your eye) when you die to help someone who needs a transplant. People who need organs and/or tissue replacement go on transplant lists to wait for a suitable donor to become available. Find out more on the [nhs organ donation website](#).

Options

There are two options of organ and tissue donation to be considered:

Opt-in

The current policy in England is 'opt-in'; this means that people must sign up to the organ and tissue donation register, specifying which organs and/or tissues they are willing to donate after they die.

- You can join the organ and tissue donation list no matter what your age or health.
- Your family can still choose to override your request (and if you are under 18 your parents need to agree to your wishes).

- If you are not signed up to the register, your family can still choose to donate your organs and/or tissues if they believe this is what you would have wished.

Opt-out

The 'opt-out' policy means that everyone is automatically considered to be a potential donor. An example option of an 'opt-out' policy would be:

- If you do not wish to donate your organs or tissue you would need to register a decision not to be a donor.
- If you do not register a decision it will be assumed that you are happy to donate your organs and tissue after you die.
- You can choose to donate only specific organs.
- You can appoint a representative to make a decision about consent on your behalf.
- If you lack capacity to understand the policy, a representative will make a decision upon your behalf.

This is a 'soft' opt-out system as the family can still refuse the donation on the individual's behalf if they believe that they did not want to be a donor.

Find out more about the options

To find out more about the current 'opt-in' policy in England

see www.organdonation.nhs.uk

To find out more about the 'opt-out' policy being introduced in Wales in 2015

see www.organdonationwales.org