



## Welcome to the Spring edition of Connexions

We hope that you are all looking forward to the lighter nights and warmer weather. We all know that love doesn't end and so the ache can ebb and flow. Our loved ones are always in our hearts and thoughts. Talk about them, remember them and take care of yourself. Support from the network is available all year round. Please do not hesitate to contact us we offer you support at any time.

The Donor Family Network will once again be attending the British Transplant Games this year, to which you are all welcome. Further details can be found on page .....

We will be holding our annual remembrance event at the National Memorial Arboretum on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2026. Please note the date and we hope you can join us. More details will be available in our next newsletter.

DONOR FAMILY NETWORK

# CONNEXIONS

Registered charity  
1098781

## SAVE THE DATE



**The Donor Family Network**

**THE PRECIOUS GIFT 2026**

*A Service of Hope and Thanksgiving*

*Donor and recipient families, professionals and anyone interested in organ and tissue donation welcome*

**SUNDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 2026 at 1PM**

**National Memorial Arboretum  
Croxall Road, Alrewas, Burton-on-Trent DE13 7AR**

Please e-mail the charity if you plan to attend so we can plan for the numbers attending.  
Please attach a photo of your loved one if you wish this to be displayed.

[www.donorfamilynetwork.co.uk](http://www.donorfamilynetwork.co.uk)

Email: [info@donorfamilynetwork.co.uk](mailto:info@donorfamilynetwork.co.uk)



The  
Gift of Life  
Memorial



### Thankyou to our regular donors:

Patrick Gallagher

A Heron

Pauline McDonnell

Darren Cox

J Fletcher

Tracey Lyon

Keith Astbury

S Hall

Esther Watt Jones

Roger Quick

Paul White

Dale Gardiner

### Donations have also been received from:

Bird & Co Solicitors

Heart recipient Sid Lamb, Scalm Park Leisure

Hilary Raycraft

James Burdon

Carol Thompson in memory of her sister Catherine Burns

Alick & Penny Moore in memory of their son David

Susan Evans in memory of her husband Barry

I & J Mathews in memory of Pamela

Tony Iddon in memory of his wife Thelma

Renzo Giovannini in memory of his son Luca

Christine Fallow in memory of her husband Andrew

Julie Pearce in memory of Jack

Vince Mott in memory of hie daughter Phoebe

Abigail Whitehouse in memory of Oliver

Doreen Booth in memory of her husband Alan

Anne Hathaway in memory of her husband Derek

Penny Staley in memory of her daughter Evey Rose

Pauline Holmes in memory of her son Russell

Christine Gamble in memory of her husband Phillip



Donations in memory of Linda Thomson

Donations in memory of David Greene

Donations in memory of Janet Shorrock

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## JUST GIVING

**Louise Prashad** continues to raise funds for the DFN through her Run to Remember in honour of donors.

Now she is among 26 exceptional individuals to be honoured with the British Citizen Award (BCA) at the Palace of Westminster in London.

In 2016 Louise was diagnosed with a rare liver disease during pregnancy and lost her twin babies. She had only eight hours to live and only a ten per cent chance of survival when a stranger's decision to donate a liver saved her life. She made a promise to make every day count.



Since then, she has raised over £350,000 for organ-donation and trauma recovery causes. She has competed in more than 300 races, and represented Team GB in Athletics at the World Transplant Games. Her survival was the gift of someone else's generosity; her mission, through more than 600 talks, events and campaigns, is to turn that gift into hundreds of lives changed.



She says, 'This award is dedicated to donor families. In the midst of unimaginable grief, they chose compassion, and that decision gave me my future'.

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**The 46 Crew Charity Support** are a motorcycle riding crew who raise funds for different charities.

DFN member Paul Jasper is a member of the crew and recently took part in a fund raising ride along the coast of Cornwall, in loving memory of his wife Cheryl who donated in 2016.



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## Sharon Uhrig, Partner to Will, has kindly shared her thoughts

### She says, 'Will gave his heart in life and in death'

'Will was a volunteer coastguard, which he loved being part of. When his bleep went off he would be straight out the door and made some great friends with the rest of the crew.'

Tom one of his coastguard team members said 'Will was a kind hearted man who put others before himself. No matter what he was doing he would always find time to help. He joined the Maryport Coastguard in 2021, as well being a well known and well liked local business man.



Will was welcomed to the team with open arms and he brought so much to the team. No matter how you were feeling on a callout or training he would make you laugh and lift the mood.

I remember a long call out we had, Will was in my search team and it was silly o'clock. We'd been out for hours. We were all tired and low in moral but Will being Will dropped a joke out and made us all laugh, keeping up that team spirit as he always did.



Will was a valued member of the team and has gone on to help others after his death through the gift of life.

We remember him and he watches over us every day.'

Will died at the age of 40 of hypoxic brain damage.

Sharon continues, 'when he arrived on the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and the doctor told us that the damage was un-survivable, I knew from my 20 years' experience as an ICU nurse what would happen next. The specialist nurses in organ donation attended the next day and I gave consent.

Will always carried his organ donation card in his wallet and he had registered on the donor website twice, I knew he was very pro donation.

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Will always told me 'if anything ever happens to me give them everything', Will's best friend said he was so grateful for the extra time he had to sit with him while the planning for organ donation was taking place. I was able to lie next to him for one last time, before he went to theatre the next day.

That evening we received a call to say that Will's heart, liver, kidney, and pancreas had been retrieved. His corneas were retrieved the next day.

A few weeks later I got a letter from donor family service to say that a man in his fifties received Will's heart, a man in his thirties received the kidney and pancreas and a man in his sixties received an urgent liver transplant. Receiving this letter gave me some comfort that Will had been able to help other people after his death like he always tried to do while he was alive.

Organ donation really is the gift of life and it is so important to share your wishes with your family as if you are ever in the situation where your loved one would be suitable for organ donation, you know exactly what they would want to do.'



This picture was taken at the World Transplant Games.

Mum Sarah said, 'This is the kind of thing that completely overwhelms me. You cannot begin to imagine how it feels knowing that your child needs a new heart and the waiting for someone (you guys and your families) to make that decision to donate. It moves me beyond measure'.

## Lynne Holt

We are privileged to tell you about a lady who spent forty-three years in the health service, thirty of those years were as a transplant co-ordinator at the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle.

Lynne Holt, who is now retired from nursing is also the Team Manager for Team GB, leading them to a number of Transplant Games.

Lynne says, 'I qualified as a State Registered Nurse at the Middlesex Hospital, London in 1977 and went on to specialise in cardio-thoracic care and transplant nursing. My transplant career began at the now Royal Papworth Hospital, near Cambridge in 1979. The UK heart transplant programme had started at the hospital under the leadership of Sir Terence English only months before my arrival. As sister in charge of the intensive care unit, I was responsible for caring for the newly transplanted patients and their families. It was an exciting and challenging time to be involved in those early days, working alongside the pioneers in heart and lung transplantation.

I was the first Clinical Transplant Co-ordinator 34 years ago to be appointed in the UK when I moved 'up north' to the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle, to co-ordinate the programme for heart and lung transplantation in both children and adults. My role was both clinical and management and involved co-ordinating the whole transplant process from the first day a patient is referred for assessment, joins the waiting list, to receiving offers of organs, liaising with the Donor Transplant Co-ordinators (now called Specialist Nurses, Organ Donation), organising the theatre teams, transport and supporting the families throughout the entire process.



Co-ordinating a retrieval that proceeds to transplant, is rewarding, exhilarating, exhausting and always humbling. It was so worthwhile to be part of the team, closely involved with patients and their families, facilitating major life and death decisions. I will never forget how desperately my patients, babies to adults, and their families, waited for the phone to ring, which may mean an of a lifesaving transplant. I also saw many of them die whilst waiting for their transplant.

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This is why I continue to be totally committed to making a difference and am passionate about promoting the benefits of organ donation and transplantation. I count myself very lucky to have started working in the NHS in the mid 70's. Life as a transplant co-ordinator was emotionally and physically draining and tears were shed, in sadness sometimes, but more often in joy. I never cease to be amazed by the miracle of the Gift of Life.

Retirement means I hopefully have more time to volunteer for Transplant Sport, be involved with the Transplant Community and as a NHSBT Organ Donation Ambassador. These last few years have seen three British Transplant Games, the European Transplant & Dialysis Games and the World Transplant Games and it has been a privilege to be Team GB Manager.'

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In 1987 **Kaylee Davidson-Olley**

became the first baby in the UK to have a Heart Transplant at Newcastle Freeman Hospital. She was born in April, a completely normal & a happy baby until at the age of 4 months she was admitted to hospital in what seemed on the surface to be a Meningitis scare.

After a 6 week wait she had her Heart Transplant on the 14th of October 1987. Thirty-eight years later she is one of the longest surviving babies in the world to conquer this huge life changing operation.



Over the decades since her transplant, Kaylee has become a passionate advocate for organ donation and a dedicated charity supporter.

Kaylee has paid tribute to the two women who saved her life over 30 years ago by having their names engraved forever on the glorious Heart of Steel, a 2.4 metre high art sculpture in Sheffield.

Kaylee said: "I wanted to do something to show Lynne and Pam that they're my heroes - as well as my donor family. After all, I wouldn't be here without them. They saved my life when I was five months old and they've been here for me

Pam, who has an OBE for her service to the transplant community, said: "I feel incredibly honoured to have my name on the Heart of Steel. Seeing it for the first time was a really emotional moment. It represents all the donors I've cared for who saved the lives of people like Kaylee."



Lynne added: "Every person whose transplant operation I coordinate is special to me. But Kaylee was our first baby and you always remember your first.

"As Kaylee has grown up I've been involved in her every milestone, and watched her become a lovely kind and caring young woman.

"When Kaylee told me she'd had my name engraved on the Heart of Steel I was overwhelmed and emotional. We've come such a long way together and it was such a moving gesture."

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## On Christmas Day morning we received this e mail from a recipient who wanted us to share his words with you:

I woke up this morning ( Xmas day) .The first thing that came into my mind was: I'm so grateful to be here for another for Xmas, and I thank the person ( Hero) and their family who made it possible. It is two years since I was given a liver transplant. After springing out of bed,( which I couldn't have done before my transplant) I went onto my "WHATS APP" group which is made up of pre and post transplant people. We all spoke about how grateful we all are to able to enjoy this day and all remember this is only possible because of the person who gave us their organs and the bravery and charity of their family's for allowing us to be given another shot at Life. I would like everyone who has given us this opportunity to know that not a day goes by "not just Xmas day" when we remember their loved one and say thanks to them. I hope it helps donor families to see this.

Regards Phil Allen

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**Margaret Benson**, a recipient friend from Canada, received a double lung transplant, aged 40, on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, after years of suffering with cystic fibrosis. She is a advocate for organ donation, regularly giving speeches and fundraises for cystic fibrosis. She represents Canada at the World Transplant Games, never forgetting the time she was able to take her first deep breath.



These were her words just before Christmas on Facebook, on the anniversary of her transplant, which she agreed we could share: 'My tree lights are on and my outside lights are lit in memory of my donor and donor family. Twenty-six years ago, a family made a decision to donate their loved one's organs and that person saved four peoples live. Mine included. Tomorrow we will celebrate my transplant, but today is about my donor and donor family. There are no words that can express my gratitude for the last 26 years of my life. I am grateful for the gift that I received, thank you to my donor and donor family and in honour of that decision my tree lights are lit.



Tomorrow I will be delivering popcorn to the transplant unit at Vancouver hospital to thank all the people who made this miracle possible, 26 years ago. I was given 5 years to live, that's what double lung transplants were given. Hard to believe I have lived a very full life in the last 26 years all thanks to a decision that was made by a family and one individual. Thank you from the bottom of my heart or should I say lungs.'

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## MAGGIE'S STORY

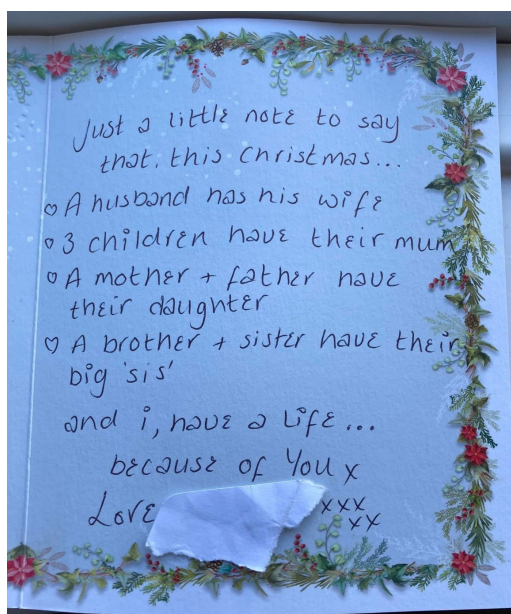
One family who found themselves supporting organ donation in circumstances where the new law was applied, was the family of Maggie Sturgess. Maggie, a much-loved local pub landlady, sadly died in November 2020 following a sudden, catastrophic brain haemorrhage. Although Maggie had not recorded an organ donation decision, she went on to save 3 lives, after donating two kidneys and her liver and helped many more by donating her corneas, heart tissue, skin and bone.

Maggie's daughter, Lizzie, says: 'Mum was known for her zest for life and generous nature. She lived for the moment and never wanted to talk about death as she felt she was 'too young for that'. Then suddenly, last November, while taking my dad for a hospital appointment she collapsed in the hospital car park. She had a stroke which caused a brain haemorrhage. As a family we were told the devastating news that she would never recover.

Mum was just 61 years old and we didn't get a chance to speak with her about what she wanted. As a family it was difficult to suddenly find ourselves having to make that decision as well as cope with her death and providing support to other members of the family. Ultimately we decided that organ donation was the right decision. It fitted with mum's generous nature and we have known people waiting for transplant. Our Christmas was never going to be good, but it felt right if we could make someone else's just that bit better.

We are proud of the decision we made, and the lives mum was able to save, but it Doesn't change the fact that we wish we had heard it from mum herself.'

Lizzie has recently received this lovely note from a grateful recipient.



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## Believe garden

The Senedd Wales passed the Human Transplantation (Wales) Act 2013, which created an opt out system which came into effect on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, making Wales the first country in the UK to introduce an opt out system for organ and tissue donation.

To mark the 10<sup>+</sup> anniversary, on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025 the Believe Memorial Garden, located at Thornhill Crematorium, Cardiff, Wales was officially opened.



The garden, spearheaded by organ donor charity Believe Organ Donation Support (founded in 2015 by Anna-Louise Bates) is a space where people can pay respects and provides donor families a space to reflect and honour their loved ones. Anna said, 'Having a garden like this to sit, remember and give thanks is important for those we have lost and who live on thanks to organ donation. We are so grateful to everyone who is supporting us'.

A key feature of the garden is an 82-metre heart shape that is visible from above, including on Google maps and from flight paths. This is made from Welsh slate and engraved with educational quotes from donor families. Mounds within the garden are designed to reflect the shapes of kidneys and a liver, symbolising organ donation. At the centre of the heart is a memory bowl where families can place memory stones, inscribed with the initials of loved ones. Pebbles can also be purchased for home delivery with proceeds going to the Believe charity.





The family of **Gary Bush** have kindly made a generous donation to the DFN in his memory. Gary loved his friends and family and his passion was fishing. He was well know in the local area and spent many holidays near a lake. In 2019 everything changed.

Gary was diagnosed with asthma at a young age and managed it well. In 2019 Gary suffered an asthma attack at home. Paramedics got him to hospital as soon as they could and he fought for his life in ICU. Unfortunately Gary lost his battle.



During the time in ICU his family were asked if they knew Gary's decision on organ donation. His family were very aware of his thoughts and this made their decision easy. Selfless in death as in life, Gary became an organ donor, saving the lives of several people.



Following his death, Gary's sister Kirsty founded the Gary Bush Foundation with thr following aims:

- To raise knowledge, understanding and conversation around organ donation
- To raise awareness of the severity of asthma
- To raise funds for charities that have played an important role in Gary's life

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## Donor Family Network Research Survey

We would like to thank everyone who responded to our recent survey regarding the use of organs / tissue for research. We received an amazing 202 responses. This survey was produced with the assistance of the UK Organ Donation and Transplantation Research Network (UKODTRN) and they have also analysed the results. We have included the first page of the survey here and the detailed full survey can be found on our website.



We felt that it was very important to hear the voice of donor families and following the comments received from you and the questions asked it became clear the factors you felt were important included the utilisation of the organs offered and the successful outcome for the recipient. Education around organ donation was also a key feature which was important to many of you.

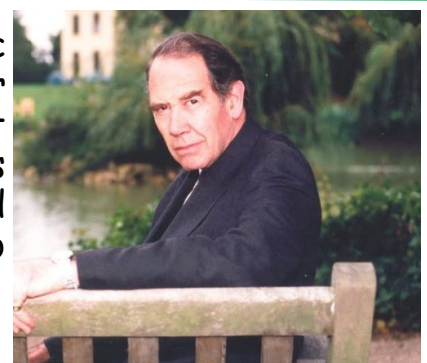
Together with the request for questions regarding research from donor families we asked whether or not you had agreed to research at the time of consent and your reasons. Many responses showed a lack of understanding as to what research in organ donation meant and a feeling that it was too scientific, rather than personal, with less immediate benefit.

We hope that your views can be shared further within the transplant community, could be used to assist the specialist nurses in the future and may be written up as a medical paper.

There is a huge amount of raw data to consider and we aim to answer some of your questions and share more of your comments in future newsletters. We intend to continue to use the data collected and with the assistance of the UKODTRN have been granted the chance to present our research as a medical abstract at the national Organ Donation Congress in March.

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Sir Terence English, a renowned British cardiac surgeon passed away recently. He is best known for leading the UK's first successful heart transplant operation in 1979 at Papworth Hospital. He served as a consultant cardiothoracic surgeon at Papworth and Addenbrooke's Hospitals in Cambridge from 1972 to 1995.





## **Consent to Organ and Tissue Donation for Research**

The UK Organ Donation and Transplantation Research Network (UKODTRN) and the Donor Family Network wanted to understand the reasons why family members of potential organ and tissue donors may say yes or no to donation for research. We shared a survey asking donor families about their views and experiences.

### **Why did families say no to donation for research?**

At the time of donation, 62% of people were asked about donation of solid organs or tissue for research, and 86% of those asked consented to it. We asked those who did not consent to share the reasons why they did not. These were the most common answers:

- They were honouring the donor's wishes
- They did not feel comfortable with this type of donation
- They did not fully understand the process
- They saw less immediate personal benefit from research than transplantation

"When they say research it sounds like science but with donation to a person it feels more personal"

Of the 18 who did not consent to donation for research, 12 stated their decision would have- or might have- been different if they knew more about research involving donated organs and tissue.

### **Knowledge and views about donation for research**

Most respondents felt very positive (51%) about the use of organs and tissue for research, however, less knew about the research and its potential benefits. 18% reported having no knowledge of how organs or tissues are used in research, and 16% reported having no knowledge of the potential benefits of this type of research.

### **Suggestions for improving communication with donor families**

90% of respondents agreed that the public should receive more information about the potential use of human organs and tissues in research. Other suggestions included:

- Research should be better communicated with families of potential donors by referencing examples of specific studies and discussing the potential benefits. This could be done through discussions, a leaflet, a video, or through a specialist app.
- Families should be told more specific information about what will happen to the donor's organs or tissue, but only if they choose to know more.
- There should be more public awareness and education about the benefits of organ or tissue donation for research, so families are already aware of this topic when faced with the decision. This could be achieved through social media campaigns, school or university curriculum, documentaries, advertising, and GP surgeries and hospitals.
- People should be encouraged to share their wishes around organ and tissue donation for transplantation and research with family members so they can honour their wishes.

"we were aware of organ donation... but we had no knowledge at all about donation for research... I think it still feels like a taboo subject that people don't understand so they don't think about it or discuss it. Education is the way forward"



Some of the Trustees from the DFN recently travelled to Sheffield to attend the launch of the 48<sup>th</sup> Westfield Health and Transplant Active British Transplant Games 2026, which will take place in Sheffield between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 2026. Directors Yuri Matischan and John Timms from MLS GB, the event organisers, arranged an interesting morning, including a number of speakers.

Deputy Mayor of Sheffield, Andrew Sangar, spoke of his vision for the city hosting the Games. Dr Paul Harden, Chair of the Trustees for Transplant Active spoke about how the Games are an annual celebration of the Gift of Life. Steve Purdham, Chair of Westfield Health (the main sponsors for the Games) spoke enthusiastically about the positive effects on everyone who attends the Games.

Yuri then briefly interviewed liver recipient and local artist Pete McKee who received a liver in 2017 and now competes in the Games. Karen Piotr, Trustee of the DFN, Organ Donor Ambassador and Chair of the Organ Donation Committee for the Bradford NHS Trust lost her husband Mark following a brain haemorrhage and consented to organ donation. Pete McKee received Marks liver. Seeing them together gave a very positive vibe to the event.

Next to speak was Mahmud Nawaz, member of the DFN and Chair of the Board of directors for Sheffield Hospitals Trust, who shared his memories from his first Games. Then Sabia Rehman, chaplain at Sheffield Hospitals, spoke about her work encouraging the conversation about organ donation with ethnic families, both in hospital and in the community.

It is expected that Sheffield will welcome 2500 participants, including athletes, supporters, live donors, donor families, therapy teams and volunteers. The Games will commence with an Opening Ceremony with a parade of teams in the city centre, following which the donor flame (donated by the DFN) will be lit. then follows three days of 26 different sporting events around the city.

If you haven't been before please consider joining the donor families team at this inspiring event, allowing you to meet lots of recipients with amazing stories and of course other donor families. Please e mail or telephone us if you are interested or would like further information.

Jim, the donor families team manager will be in touch before registration opens in May, with any families who joined us at the Games in Oxford in 2025.



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## WORDS CONTAINING THE WORD HEART QUIZ

1	Area in front of the fire	6	HEARTH
2	Has exceptional bravery or courage	11	LION HEARTED
3	Pulsation of a major organ	9	HEARTBEAT
4	Romantic partners	11	SWEETHEARTS
5	Grief or anguish	10	HEARTBREAK
6	Having concern, empathy for others	11	GOOD HEARTED
7	Substantial, filling	6	HEARTY
8	Cruel or callous	9	HEARTLESS
9	Emotionally generous, receptive	11	KIND HEARTED
10	Lacking courage, timid	12	FAINT HEARTED
11	Sympathetic, emotionally responsive	11	SOFT HEARTED
12	With gusto and zest	8	HEARTILY
13	Complete commitment	14	WHOLEHEARTEDLY
14	Dejected or discouraged	11	DOWNHEARTED
15	A symbol of love and affection	11	HEARTSHAPED
16	A physically attractive person	9	HEARTHROB
17	A lack of feeling, indifferent	11	COLD HEARTED
18	Deeply sincere, genuine	9	HEARTFELT
19	Lacking spirit or enthusiasm	11	HALF HEARTED
20	Pulls and stirs tender emotions	12	HEARTSTRINGS

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Donor\_Family\_Network

*One Family's Heartbreak  
can become another  
Family's Miracle.*

