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Media Release

Confirm your decision to save lives this Organ Donation Week

The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust is urging people to register their decision to be an organ donor after new figures show that more than 12,000 people in the UK have died or been removed from the transplant waiting list over the past 10 years before receiving the lifesaving organs they desperately needed – including 53 from Somerset.

Figures released by NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) to mark Organ Donation Week (Monday 22 – Sunday 28 September) show that 4,900 people died while actively waiting for a lifesaving transplant, and a further 7,700 were removed from the active list after being deemed too sick to receive one, with many dying soon after - highlighting the urgent need to increase organ donation registrations.

Earlier this year, NHSBT revealed the transplant waiting list had reached its highest level ever recorded with 8,000 people actively waiting for a lifesaving transplant – including 92 people in Somerset.

Alison Ryan, Chair of the RUH Organ & Tissue Donation Committee, said: “Confirming your decision to donate on the NHS Organ Donor Register makes it clear to your family that you want to be an organ donor, leaving them certain of your decision at what is a difficult and emotional time.

“We need more people in our local community to confirm their decision on the register today to save more lives now and in the future.

“More than 44,000 people in Bath and North East Somerset have already declared their decision through the NHS Organ Donor Register, which is the best way for their family to know what they want. Nine out of 10 families will support organ donation if their loved one had confirmed their decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

“My late husband was given an additional 18 years of life because of the generosity of an organ donation so I know first-hand the real difference it makes and the deep feelings of gratitude and respect for the donor which lives in the recipients’ families forever.”

In addition to its work with organ donation, the RUH works in partnership with NHS Blood and Transplant, Tissue and Eye Services as a key donation site, aiming to offer the option of tissue donation to bereaved families as part of normal end of life practice. One tissue donor can potentially help up to 50 individuals with the gifts of healing, sight and relief of pain.

Joanne Pattemore, Specialist Nurse for Organ Donation from NHS Blood and Transplant, based at Royal United Hospital, Bath said: “I would urge everyone who supports organ donation to register their decision and make it clear that it’s what you want should the worst happen. It only takes two minutes to register but it could save the lives of people who so desperately need a transplant. Please sign up. It’s the best thing you’ll do today.”

Anthony Clarkson, Director of Organ Donation and Transplantation at NHS Blood and Transplant, said: “Someone will die today waiting for an organ transplant. You are more likely to need a transplant than you ever are to be a donor - and most of us would accept an organ if we needed one – but far fewer of us have made the decision to donate.

“By confirming your decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register, you could save or transform up to nine lives.”

Since its creation in 1994, thousands of lives have been saved thanks to people agreeing to donate their organs after death by confirming their decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

The law around organ donation now assumes that unless you have ‘opted out’ you will be considered for organ donation after your death. However, families are still asked for their consent and they are more likely to give it if you have formally ‘opted in’ by joining the register.

To find out more and confirm your decision, visit the NHS Organ Donor Register at www.organdonation.nhs.uk, or call 0300 123 23 23. Users of the NHS app, can also use this to record, check or amend their details or decision.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

At the RUH we're proud to put people at the heart of what we do, striving to create an environment where everyone matters. Everyone means the people we care for, the people we work with and the people in our community.

We provide a wide range of services including medicine and surgery, services for women and children, accident and emergency services, and diagnostic and clinical support services.

We also provide specialist services for rheumatology, chronic pain and chronic fatigue syndrome/ME via the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases which we acquired in 2015.

In 2021, we acquired Sulis Hospital Bath, an independent hospital that provides care for both private and NHS patients. This has enabled us to provide more care for NHS patients, as well as continuing to provide private care to those who choose it. Any additional income earned through private care is reinvested in services for the benefit of the people we care for at both Sulis and the RUH.

Our new Dyson Cancer Centre brings together many of the RUH's cancer services under one roof to provide a cancer services hub for over 500,000 people in the South West. The centre includes the RUH's oncology, chemotherapy and radiotherapy services, a 22-bed inpatient ward, a dedicated pharmacy, research team and nuclear medicine and physics teams.

A key feature of the new centre is the Macmillan Wellbeing Hub. The three-storey hub provides a welcoming, non-clinical space designed around the needs of patients and their families. It also includes comfortable accommodation where relatives and loved ones can stay overnight.

We work closely with other health and care organisations as members of the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board. We strive to improve the health and wellbeing of the people in our community by working together build one of the healthiest places to live and work.

We are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

For more information about the Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust visit: www.ruh.nhs.uk