

Organ Donor Awareness Week 2025 - A call for Conversation and Action (<https://www.activelink.ie/node/115433>)

www.ika.ie/donorweek/ (<http://www.ika.ie/donorweek/>)

Organ Donor Awareness Week 2025 (May 10th–17th) was officially launched at the Mansion House, Dublin, on Tuesday, May 6th (11am-1.30pm), with a powerful national call to action “**Don’t Leave Your Loved Ones in Doubt**”. Organised by the **Irish Kidney Association (IKA)** with support from the **HSE’s Organ Donation Transplant Ireland (ODTI) office**, the campaign shines a spotlight on the life-changing impact of organ donation for transplantation and the role that families play in ensuring that your wishes are carried out.

Although the Minister for Health was unable to attend due to a late change in her scheduling commitments, the importance of this year’s campaign was powerfully conveyed through the voices of individuals and families whose lives have been changed by organ donation. Their moving stories, shared at the launch (which can be viewed on the IKA’s YouTube Channel www.youtube.com/@IrishKidneyAssociation (<http://www.youtube.com/@IrishKidneyAssociation>)) carried a common message of hope, gratitude, and compassion. In highlighting how, for them, organ failure brought into focus how precious time is with family, friends and for fulfilling your hopes and dreams, each of the speakers brought home the fact that organ donation is the gift of so many life experiences and it is appreciated every day. They were supported on the day by family members and also in attendance were medical and nursing professionals including donor and transplant coordinators, representatives from patient advocacy groups, the HSE Organ Donation Transplant Ireland (ODTI) office and the Department of Health.

In 2024, **263 organ transplants** were carried out thanks to the generosity of **84 deceased** donors and **30 living** kidney donors. This included **175 Kidney** transplants, **53 Liver** transplants, **16 Heart** transplants, **15 Lung** transplants, **4 Pancreas** transplants.

With over 600 people currently on transplant waiting lists for organs including the heart, lung, liver, kidney, and pancreas, and over 500 of these waiting for a kidney transplant alone, the need for a national conversation about organ donation has never been more urgent.

Speaking at the launch, Ms. Carol Moore, CEO, Irish Kidney Association said, “We must always remember that without organ donation, there is no transplantation. In 2024, 84 families, in the most tragic of circumstances, selflessly consented to their loved one’s organs being donated. These individual acts of humanity have saved and transformed lives across Ireland and are an example to us all.”

“We look forward to the Minister for Health’s forthcoming announcement of the commencement date for Part 2 (Transplantation) of the Human Tissue Act that was enacted in February 2024. This will see the introduction of altruistic kidney donation and will also impact the management of organ donation from deceased donors. This important legislation provides the legal framework for organ donation and transplantation in Ireland.”

“It’s important to remember that only around 1% to 2% of people die in circumstances where organ donation is medically possible, typically in hospital intensive care units. This statistic underscores just how rare and precious the opportunity for organ donation truly is. That makes every potential donor incredibly valuable and highlights why family discussion remains essential.”

Ms. Moore shared, “As we entered the May bank holiday weekend, it was heartening to learn from the Road Safety Authority that over 1.6 million people, representing 47.6% of all licensed drivers, have chosen to show their support for organ donation by including Code 115 on their driving licence*. This is a hugely positive reflection of public sentiment, especially considering that it has happened without any targeted education or promotion linked to the licence application process.”

Just like carrying a physical organ donor card or having a digital donor card, Code 115 is a visible reminder of a person’s decision and a powerful conversation starter. It opens the door for families to talk about their wishes, helping to ensure no one is left in doubt if and when the time comes.”

Under the new legislation, an opt-out register will be established. If a person chooses to record their decision to opt-out of consideration as a potential organ donor, their family will not be approached. However, in all other cases, whilst consent to donate will be deemed, retrieval will not happen unless the family confirm that they have no objection to it.

Dr. Brian O’Brien, Clinical Director, Organ Donation Transplant Ireland, HSE, and consultant in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Medicine at Cork University Hospital, in his speech at the launch said, “While much of what defines modern

medicine entails complex science and technological innovation, it is humbling that one of its most sophisticated frontiers is founded entirely on community, altruism and compassion. Organ donation, a gesture of kindness to strangers made in the bleakest of circumstances, encapsulates much of what is good about humanity. Under forthcoming legislation, living donation will become more feasible in Ireland. We welcome the introduction of the Human Tissue Act therefore, and hope it serves to raise awareness of this most vital practice. We encourage all to make their views on donation known to those close to them".

Organ Donor Awareness Week will commence on Saturday, May 10th and continues until May 17th with a range of awareness activities encouraging conversations in homes, schools, workplaces, clubs, and community settings. An Post is supporting the Donor Week campaign again this year, displaying stocks of donor cards and campaign posters throughout its network of post offices. Together with the Irish Pharmacy Union, several pharmacy chains, independent pharmacies, and many libraries around the country are also supporting this initiative. This is helping to drive community awareness and make a difference in the lives of the close to 600 people on transplant waiting lists in Ireland and their families.

To find out more about the campaign, download campaign resources, including the campaign poster (available in English, Irish, Polish, and Yoruba), or to request an organ donor card, visit www.ika.ie/donorweek/ (<http://www.ika.ie/donorweek/>)

Ways To Show Your Support For Organ Donation

- **Don't Leave Your Loved Ones in Doubt.** Talk to them. Share your wishes about organ donation. Say it, Share it, Save a Life.
- Request an Organ Donor Card from the Irish Kidney Association website www.ika.ie/donorweek/ (<http://www.ika.ie/donorweek/>)
- Tick the box YES for organ donation when applying for, or renewing, your driving licence represented by **Code 115**
- Follow the Irish Kidney Association's activities on social media, show your support and share the messaging with your own network: X **@IrishKidneyAs** Instagram **@IrishKidneyA**, Facebook **@IrishKidneyAssociation**, LinkedIn **irishkidneyassociation**

Social media hashtags: **#LeaveNoDoubt #ShareYourWishes #DonorWeek25**

Region

Nationwide

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