



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Providing scientific advice to Parliaments – Lessons learned from the UK

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Parliament



Legislation – Scrutiny - Debate



Many different actors

- Backbencher
- Shadow cabinet
- Committee chair
- MPs researchers
- Clerks
- Speaker
- Contribute to debate
- Respond to a constituent
- Ask a parliamentary question
- Vote on a bill
- Decide what to run an inquiry on



Scientific advice to Parliament

House of Commons Committees	House of Lords Committees
<i>House of Commons Library</i>	<i>House of Lords Library</i>
Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)	
<i>All Party Parliamentary Groups (e.g., Parliamentary and Scientific Committee)</i>	

External stakeholders
(learned societies, thinktanks, academics, industry,
campaign groups...)



What POST Does

Bicameral institution of Parliament governed by parliamentary board and funded by parliament:

- Pro-active focus
- External facing
- Specific focus on research evidence




Objective analysis-‘POSTnotes’

- Take + 3 months to produce
- Involve input from 20+ external stakeholders, including academics
- Undergo several stages of review both within and outside parliament
- Aim to *inform* parliamentary debate but not to *influence it* in any particular policy direction

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POSTNOTE
Number 441 September 2013

Organ Donation and Transplants



Overview

- The demand for organs for transplant in the UK outstrips supply. The organ shortage is most acute for Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.
- Implementation of recommendations made by the Organ Donation Taskforce in 2008 increased the number of deceased donations by around 50%.
- The rise in donations is primarily due to more donors being identified and consequently more families being asked to consider donation. Families refuse to consent to donating their loved ones' organs in around 60% of cases where the person's wishes are unknown.
- The National Assembly for Wales has passed a Bill intended to increase organ availability by adopting deemed consent, an opt-out system.

Transplants are the most effective treatment for organ failure. There is a need to increase the number of organs donated. The Human Transplantation (Wales) Bill passed by the National Assembly for Wales revises the current opt-in consent procedure for donations to deemed consent. A new UK strategy sets out policy intended to improve organ transplant rates. This POSTnote examines this and other policies to increase the availability of donor organs in the UK.

Background

Transplants save lives, improve quality of life and are cost effective, but not enough organs are available. Table 1 shows some key statistics of organ donation, transplantation and demand in the UK. Although deceased donor numbers have risen by 50% since 2008 it is estimated that 1,000 people a year are dying in the UK while waiting for a transplant.¹ The organ shortage is most acute for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) patients who wait longer (one year on average) for an organ (Box 1). The North Organ Donor Register (NODR) is a database holding the details of people who would like to donate their organs after death. A donor can donate more than one organ but the number of transplants is greater than the number of donors.

Table 1: Organ Transplants across the UK (April 2012) (Rank 2012)

	UK	England	Scotland	Wales	NI
% Population on GDP	31	38	41	32	31
Deceased Donors	1,212	1,026	99	92	95
Living Donors	1,095	829	71	42	53
Total Organs	4,210	3,517	258	211	123
People Remaining on Waiting List	7,238	6,255	625	228	190

Demands for Organs

Organ failure can be caused by congenital conditions. For example people with cystic fibrosis often need a lung transplant. However the demand for organs is likely to continue to rise because of an ageing population and the increasing prevalence of lifestyle and diseases such as diabetes, hepatitis C, hypertension and those related to alcohol. These conditions also contribute to a decline in the

1. Few people die in circumstances that make organ donation possible, such as in intensive care. There are one half a million deaths in the UK each year but fewer than five thousand people die in circumstances where organs can be donated (1%). There were 2,112 deceased donors in 2012/13. The gap between potential and actual donors is because some people's organs are unsuitable to transplant or because their family did not give consent. The rate of transplantation using organs from deceased donors in the



support to committees/libraries

- Contacts and background literature
- Briefings
- Suggestions for inquiry topics
- Suggested questions for witnesses
- Assistance with reviewing evidence



principles

- Impartiality
- Objectivity
- Independence
- Transparency



Social sciences

The overarching aim of the Social Science Section is to **provide parliamentarians with more access to social science research evidence and to support the use of research evidence across Parliament.**



Demand vs supply

- Understanding of what research evidence is, and how it is obtained, is crucial
- Appreciation of quality/critical appraisal
 - Capacity building of staff
 - Members professional development
- What the public think drives what parliament cares about



Thank you!

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