Human Tissue Authority

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Dear Independent Assessors,

**Living donation update**

This email provides a reminder about the information we need to evidence a claimed relationship and includes other important updates.

There is increased risk posed by the growing threat of human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal and we all need to be alert to this. It’s crucial that we continue to ensure robust processes are in place.

By the end of 2023 we will publish revised Guidance to transplant teams and Independent Assessors. Current guidance can be found [here](https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/regulated-sectors/organ-donation-and-transplantation/living-organ-donation-1). Our Code of Practice on living donation also contains essential information and can be accessed [here](https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/codes-practice-standards-and-legislation/codes-practice) (not applicable in Scotland).

By April 2024 all Independent Assessors will be asked to attend mandatory, targeted refresher training which will include information on signs and indicators of trafficking.

There has been a change in the nature of the cases we are receiving for approval. Many cases are more complex. There has been an increase in directed cases where the relationship between donor and recipient is remote. Many of these are being submitted without evidence to demonstrate the claimed relationship.

We know you are working to tight timelines and delays and clarifications cause frustration. It may take longer for the HTA to make a decision on some cases.

With your help, we can keep these to a minimum by following the guidance. In particular:

* **Evidence of claimed relationship** – please ensure the documents demonstrate the claimed relationship between the donor and recipient. If they do not, please ask the donor and recipient if evidence is available. Please provide detail in your report, describing what you have seen and how it demonstrates the claimed relationship. In line with [Guidance](https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/regulated-sectors/organ-donation-and-transplantation/living-organ-donation-1), this should be marriage certificates, birth certificates etc. If photographs are shown, all parties should be identifiable in photographs spanning the length of time of the relationship. Please describe the photographs you have seen.
* **Interviews should be conducted with the donor alone, the recipient alone and both together (in any order).** Third parties including other family members should not be attending interviews unless there is a specific need to do so. More information is available at paragraph 154 of our [Guidance](https://www.hta.gov.uk/guidance-professionals/regulated-sectors/organ-donation-and-transplantation/living-organ-donation-1). Please contact the HTA in advance for advice if you have any questions.
* **Seeking additional information or clarification is a standard part of our role, which helps us make a decision on each case**. As the regulator, and decision maker, it’s crucial we have the information needed to ensure the criteria set out in law has been met.
* **Please ensure when accepting a case that you will be available to answer questions following submission of your report to the HTA**. If you know you will be unavailable, please tell us when in your IA report.
* **All supporting documents, including referral letter and donor declaration must be uploaded at the same time as your report**. We are unable to receive these by email. Please contact our IT support on **01977 667777** if you need help to upload these with your report.
* **Remember to double check the accuracy of the information being submitted in your report**. There have been several examples of incorrect names being included in reports relating to other individuals.

We appreciate the time and care it takes to undertake these interviews and we thank you for your continued support in this essential role.

Please contact us on transplants@hta.gov.uk if we can offer any further advice or guidance.

Yours sincerely,

Jess

Jessica Porter

**Head of Regulation**

**Organ Donation and Transplantation**