

# A guide to giving the gift of sight



*Laura has had cornea transplants in both of her eyes; "I feel forever grateful to my donor and their family. I can now see my son's lovely little face!"*



## Donating sight can help people to see again

Corneal transplants help to restore the sight of patients across the UK every year and these are only possible through the generosity of people who are willing to donate and help others.

Almost anyone can donate their corneas. Age, poor eyesight or medical conditions, including cancer, are not necessarily a barrier to donation.

Eye donation can help restore sight to people with cornea problems (the clear part of the eye). This may be a result of damage caused by eye disease or injury, or defects from birth. The white part of the eye (the sclera) can be used in operations to rebuild the eye.

### Laura's story

Laura has had two cornea transplants for an undiagnosed illness.

She said: *"I started getting 'morning misting'. My vision was misty on waking, but cleared during*



*the day. I used to get halos around any lights that I was looking at too. Eventually, the misting would not clear."*

Laura had a cornea transplant in her right eye in 2005 and then when the same problem developed in her left eye she had a second transplant ten years later.

She said: *"Had I not had both corneas transplanted, I probably wouldn't have been able to continue in my job, and therefore wouldn't have met my partner and probably wouldn't even have my son."*

*"I feel forever grateful to my donor and their family. Words are not enough to express my gratitude."*

## **Andrew's story**

Andrew died of pancreatic cancer aged 59 in 2016.

His daughter Vivien said: *"Dad's cancer was one of the most aggressive tumours the specialists had ever seen, and it was two months from his diagnosis until he died."*

*"The doctors told us it wouldn't be safe to donate his organs but that the one thing they could safely give to a patient was his corneas."*

*"We had a letter to say dad's corneas had successfully been used for transplant. It's a miracle to us that someone somewhere has had their sight restored or saved because of dad."*

*"None of us knew that dying cancer patients could safely donate corneas, even if the patient is short-sighted and has a particularly aggressive spreading cancer."*

Andrew was an enthusiastic, active, fun-loving man who died of pancreatic cancer aged 59.



If you would like to be able to give someone the gift of sight after you die, please ensure that you tell your closest family or friends about your decision so that they know to support it, as well as the hospice or hospital staff looking after you.

Your family will be asked about your donation decision even if you are on the NHS Organ Donor Register. If you have told them you want to be a donor, it makes it easier for them to support your decision.

Eye donation can take place at the hospice or funeral home, up to 24 hours after death and does not delay funeral arrangements.

To enable donation to go ahead, a healthcare professional will notify the specialist tissue donation nurse of a patient's decision to donate as soon as possible after their death.

If donation is possible, the specialist nurse will call the family to explain the donation process, check the medical history they have been given is complete and confirm the family's support for the patient's decision to donate. The family will have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have.

Patients can still donate if they die at home. The next of kin will need to contact the specialist nurse as soon as possible after the death.

## **Specialist Tissue Donation Nurse** **0800 432 0559**

Throughout the donation, the body is treated with respect and dignity and our specialist team will ensure that the donor maintains a natural appearance. Relatives can still visit after donation has taken place.

## Further information

If you do not wish to donate sight or other tissue after death, you can record your decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

If you would like to discuss tissue donation in more detail or you have any further questions, you can speak to a specialist nurse on:

**0800 432 0559 (Freephone)**

To give the gift of sight, join the NHS Organ Donor Register and share your decision with your family. visit **organdonation.nhs.uk** or call **0300 123 23 23**



nhsorgandonor