

# Doctors hail life-saving change in organ donation law

**Chris Smyth** Health Editor

People will have their organs used for transplants after their death unless they explicitly refuse consent, in a policy shift that doctors said would save lives.

Theresa May promised an opt-out system for organ donation in an announcement that was greeted as "truly momentous" by patients' advo-

cates. England is likely to follow Wales in introducing a system where consent to donate organs after death is presumed unless an objection is registered. Families will have the final say. Scotland is considering a similar system.

Supporters say that only 6 per cent of people have opted out in Wales, but critics say there is little sign of a rise in donation since the change came into effect last year. The number of trans-

plants in Wales fell from 214 in 2015-16 to 187 in 2016-17.

Mrs May told the Conservative Party conference yesterday: "Our ability to help people who need transplants is limited by the number of organ donors that come forward. To address this challenge, we will change that system."

Figures released last month showed that 177 families refused to allow relatives' organs to be used last year as they

were unsure of their wishes, potentially losing 460 organs. At the same time 457 people died on transplant waiting lists.

Fiona Loud, of Kidney Care UK, said: "This change has the potential to be both life-saving and life-changing." However, Chris Rudge, a former national transplant director, said: "There are real moral and ethical problems with it in terms of the state taking possession of your body when you die."

Times 5-10-17