

How do we decide what should be done to meet demand?

At the moment the number of people who need organs exceeds the number of organs that are available for transplant. The diagram below shows a 'ladder' where each rung represents a type of 'intervention' – actions that can be taken to encourage people to come forward as donors. At the bottom we find the interventions that seem the most straightforward – most people would be unlikely to feel strongly against them. As we step up the ladder, we find interventions that present increasingly difficult ethical questions. This does not mean that the actions on the bottom rungs are 'right' and the top ones are 'wrong' – but that as we move up the ladder we need to think carefully about possible consequences before action is taken, for example for:

- the welfare of the donor and other affected individuals such as their families;
- the impact on the wider community, for example the risk of increasing social inequality;
- the responsibilities of the doctors involved to do the best they can for all patients;
- the strength of the evidence on all these factors.



Exercise: interventions

Different countries have different systems for facilitating donation. Below are some examples of interventions to encourage donors, some of which are legal in the UK today, others are not. Can you place them along the intervention ladder and explain why you think that is where they belong?

The NHS releases a video about people who have donated their organs to save someone else's life and gives details about how to register as a donor.

A church holds a public memorial for people who have donated their body for medical research.

A person who donates an organ receives £500 and free life insurance.

A person who commits to donating their organs after death is promised priority in the queue for an organ transplant if they ever need one.

A person who donates their body after death to a medical college for research and training gets their funeral paid for by the college.

A person who drives to a clinic to donate blood has the cost of petrol and parking reimbursed by the clinic.

A person who donates their kidney while they are alive receives a 'Living Donor' badge.

Rung 6: **Offering payment or other financial incentives** that leave the donor in a better financial position as a result of donating.

Rung 5: **Offering associated benefits in kind** to encourage people who would not otherwise have considered donating

Rung 4: **Offering token prompts** to encourage people who are already inclined to donate for altruistic reasons

Rung 3: **Removing barriers and disincentives** experienced by people who would otherwise be willing to donate

Rung 2: **Expressing recognition and gratitude** for altruistic donation

Rung 1: **Providing information** about the need for donation for treatment or medical research