

Case study: Organ donor status on Facebook

In April 2012, Facebook announced that users would have the option to add 'organ donor' as a status on their Facebook 'timeline'. Facebook's Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg, said,

"What we hope will happen is that by just having this simple tool, we think that people can really help spread awareness of organ donation and that they want to participate in this to their friends... That can be a big part of helping solve the crisis that's out there."

Jamal is 16 years old and has a large network of friends on Facebook which he often shares personal news and information with. He discovers the option to add 'organ donor' status to his timeline and sees that some of his friends who have done this have had many 'likes' and positive comments on their profiles.

He wonders whether he should do the same, and decides to search online to find out more about why Facebook made this option available. He finds a video of Mark Zuckerberg's announcement, and reads the following comments from viewers

"It's a known fact that if you're listed as an organ donor doctors won't work as hard to save you...they would rather take your organs because they can treat more people with them."

"Next step - bidding for a kidney on Ebay."

"I was watching a documentary the other day, this guy, a lifelong heavy drinker, was given a liver transplant. I do not want to see my organs donated to people who got to their condition by self infliction."

"My mum is waiting for a pair of lungs as she has had pulmonary fibrosis for 18 years. It would mean the world to me for her to get a transplant. When I die, I will donate my organs."

"I want to be buried whole, not disfigured by operations. Besides, who has the right to decide when you are actually dead so they can remove your organs?"

Discuss:

- How should Jamal decide whether or not to change his status to 'Organ donor' on Facebook? What factors should he think about to help him make his decision?
- Where would you place Facebook making available the option to change your profile to organ donor on the Intervention Ladder?
- What kind of values do you think might motivate donors to come forward on Facebook?