

Religious Education lesson

(Approximately one hour)

Learning outcomes

- **All students will:** know that all the major religions in the UK support the principles of donating (in life or after death) blood, bone marrow and organs; understand that there are different opinions between religions on certain aspects.
- **Most students will:** know that some religious beliefs and customs, particularly about the end of life and burying the dead, may prohibit organ donation. All major religions accept that donating and receiving blood or organs either in life or after death is an individual choices.
- **Some students will:** know about some of the specifically different attitudes towards blood and organ donation and transplantation held by the major religions in the UK.

Starter activity (10 Min)



You could begin by watching the [introductory film](#) on the website which will introduce the students to the main issues, and tune them into thinking about the realities of becoming a donor.

How do the students feel about the following statements:

- *"I won't consider donating blood, organs or bone marrow because it's against my religion."*
- *"I won't accept a blood, organ or bone marrow donation because it's against my religion."*

Whole class activity (20 Min)



The [Religious Education PowerPoint presentation](#) explores background information about how major religions view donating. You may wish to focus your work on a particular religion in order to support your current teaching and learning programmes.

Work with the students to discover and discuss the attitudes of the major religious groups in the UK – or a particular religion, depending on your RE focus – towards blood and organ donation.

Suggested discussion points:

- Is organ donation a good enough reason to interfere with a body?
- Should organ donation after death be considered only for life saving operations?
- Why is it important to be able to specify what you want to donate (the donor card says: a) any of my organs and tissues or b) (tick boxes) kidneys, heart, liver, cornea, lungs, pancreas)?
- People following a religious faith are often encouraged to help others; does this include becoming a donor?
- If we agree to accept a transplant are we morally bound to also agree to be a donor?

Group/individual work (25 Min)



- In the Religious Education interactive activity, Points of View, students are presented with a range of dilemmas relating to religious beliefs and donating, and as if from an 'agony aunt' they answer the dilemma in the role of a religious leader.
- Introduce the activity to the whole class and model one of the answers to the dilemma, e.g. how might a Rabbi respond to a question about blood transfusions during an operation or organ transplants?
- Students can use the information from the presentation, or the fact file within the interactive activity to support their replies. More information on organ donation and religious perspectives can be found at:

https://www.uktransplant.org.uk/ukt/how_to_become_a_donor/religious_perspectives/religious_perspectives.jsp



- The students complete Activity sheet 4 (page 25) in which they draft a leaflet about donation for a young person from a particular faith group.

Plenary (5 Min)

Ask each group to summarise a religion's attitudes towards donation.

- What are the religion's guiding principles which encourage people to become donors?
- How has this information affected the students' own attitudes to donation?
- What would they be prepared to donate after death?
- Why is it a good idea to discuss donation with family and friends when considering signing up as a donor?
- Ask the students to find out how they can:
 - Become blood donors at 17
 - Sign up on the organ donor register
 - Sign up as a bone marrow donor.

Extension/homework activities



- Read the two [Religious Education news stories](#), which can be downloaded from the website. The following summaries are on *Slide 15*.
 - 'Parents who want God to save girl lose case' is about a Christian couple who refused to give permission for their baby daughter to receive a bone marrow transplant. They believed their daughter's fate was 'in God's hands'. The judge ruled against them.
 - 'Mother dies after refusing blood'. A young Jehovah's Witness died after giving birth to twins, amid claims that she had refused a blood transfusion because of her faith.
 - To help the students understand the various points of view, ask them to 'hot seat' the characters involved. For example, the parents of the baby, doctors and judge in the first case; and the young mother and father, their Witness friends, and the doctors and nurses in the second case.
 - Finally, the students can write a paragraph explaining the point of view of the doctor, a family member, a member of the religious group or the patient.
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- Consider playing one or more of the films from the National Blood Service website for a fresh perspective on cultural attitudes to donation http://www.blood.co.uk/pages/world_blood.html
 - Ask students to carry out further research to find out if all religions are in agreement about when someone is actually considered to be dead. How does this affect attitudes to organ donation and transplantation? For example, do all religions accept a Western medical definition of 'brain death' if the heart is still beating?

