

Oliver's Story – The Gift of Life



Not many families will appreciate the “gift of life” that organ donation can provide as much as little Oliver Harrison’s from Oswestry.

Oliver’s parents, Emma and Adam, had always been told to expect the worst after he was born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome, which meant that only one side of his heart was working.

Oliver was in a serious condition with his heart failing and the prospect of a transplant unlikely. His parents could do little but comfort the six-year-old as his condition deteriorated.

Then, in the middle of the night in August, they received a phone call answering their prayers. A potential donor had been found. What followed was a blue-light transfer to the airport where a private jet was waiting to take Emma and Oliver to The Freeman Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne, where he underwent a 10-hour transplant.

While the operation was a success, the family still had to deal with the news that Oliver was suffering acute rejection of his new heart, which meant another aggressive regime of treatment. But if Emma and Adam have learnt one thing, it is that their son is a fighter who has endured a lifetime of medical assessment and treatment since birth.

Oliver still needs to take 18 tablets every day, but the important thing is that he is now back at home and starting enjoy the kind of life every youngster should.

Emma and Adam both appreciate just how difficult it can be for people to talk about organ donation, but it is a conversation that can save a life. Anyone who wants to join the organ donation register should make sure they talk to their families about their wishes as this is not a decision a grieving family should be confronted with at the most difficult of times. It also makes sure that more people, like Oliver, will be grateful the most precious of all gifts – the gift of life.



Emma said: *“There is nothing more amazing than being able to give someone the gift of life. At the age of five Oliver had barely had the chance to live and I cannot thank the donor family enough for what they did.”*

“I think we need to be more open about organ donation and people need to talk about it with their families to make sure not only that their wishes are respected, but to spare their loved ones what may feel like a daunting decision at such a

terrible time. In the deepest depths of despair, and unless you have been there you cannot imagine it, it is important to know these wishes.

“For those families who have to make that decision about a loved one it is very black and white, that beautiful person is going to die. At the time it is not going to make anything better, but somewhere down the line they will realise they have been able to give the gift of life, possibly to more than one person.”

Adam said: *“We were incredibly lucky and we know that. It is very important that people who want to join the organ donation register let their family know. It is such a difficult decision for loved ones to make, but knowing the wishes of a loved one makes it so much easier.”*

