

BY ORLAITH CLINTON

TODAY marks a milestone in the life of a courageous four-year-old boy in need of a heart transplant.

Little Daithi Mac Gabhann, from Ballymurphy in West Belfast, will complete 1,000 days on a waiting list.

He was born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome, which essentially means he only has half the organ working.

Daithi was placed on the transplant waiting list in June 2018 and has remained on it since.

His family have worked tirelessly to launch the Donate4Daithi campaign, aimed at encouraging families to talk about organ donation and to sign the register.

His dad Mairtin said: "Today is a big day for our family and it is a huge milestone for Daithi."

"If I am completely honest, I didn't think we would be here after 1,000 days."

"We are looking at today as a very positive day and gratitude is the main thing for us. We are grateful that Daithi is still here and we are also grateful that he is at home and doing well while he waits."

"With Daithi and with time, we are aware that time is passing. Although we are grateful and so proud that he has reached 1,000 days on the list, there's always that worry that time may be running out, even though he is doing well."

"As we have done throughout our whole campaign, we're trying to put a positive spin on this."

"We are trying to channel the negative emotions and energy into this positive campaign and we do really believe that Daithi has made a difference. February is a massive month for any heart family – it is the heart month and then you've got the Congenital Heart Awareness Week and Valentine's Day too."

"Then there was an add this year with the public consultation on plans to introduce soft opt-out organ donation closing on the 19th."

"Everything had to stop because Daithi contracted Covid-19."

"Our campaign is very direct and we love to be in the community having face to face conversations because that is what gets people on board."

"I could talk forever about organ donation and present the facts and figures, but when people see and meet Daithi he pulls at their heart strings. It changes everything."

"When you see the Daithis of this world, that makes it real for people."

The Donate4Daithi campaign has helped to continue the conversation surrounding organ donation.

Last week, a public consultation on plans to introduce soft opt-out organ donation closed and Mairtin revealed the response was "amazing".

He added: "A lot of people ask us, 'How can we help?', and we just tell them we need them to have the conversation and

DADDY'S BOY Father and son are so close

1,000 days waiting on heart transplant list for little Daithi

4-year-old's brave battle with defect

"This journey is a lonely one.. support we get from the public is amazing"

MAIRTIN MAC GABHANN
WEST BELFAST



DEVOTED Mairtin Mac Gabhann with his son Daithi

leave their families aware of their wishes.

"People take it for granted sometimes and think they know their loved ones' decisions."

"The Covid pandemic, although we are seeing record numbers of heart transplants, we do expect there to be a backlog. Daithi hasn't been seen by his transplant centre

in over a year-and-a-half because of the pandemic – he is supposed to be seen every six months."

"We are worried about that. Although Daithi is stable and is doing well, we just don't know what will happen in the future when the pandemic is over."

"It gives us hope to keep going – the support we have been given. This journey is a lonely one for our family."

"The support that we get from the public is amazing. We couldn't do this without them."

Head of British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland Fearghal McKinney told the Mirror: "We first met Daithi and his family almost three years ago and they have a special place in all our hearts. Their passion and enthusiasm to

raise awareness of organ donation is inspirational and we are delighted they are BHF ambassadors."

"Thanks to their tireless campaigning for organ donation a public consultation on plans to introduce soft opt-out organ donation here has just closed and we are confident it will become law in Northern Ireland."

"The work they have done is not only for Daithi but for the 131 people here waiting on the new organ that will give them the gift of life."

"That wait for Daithi and his family is agonising and it's a true testament to them as a family that they have turned these past 1000 days into a campaign that will save lives."

irish@mgn.co.uk



BID Ghislaine Maxwell

Maxwell 'I'll quit as Brit' offer for bail

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKTIN
US Editor

PRINCE Andrew's pal Ghislaine Maxwell has offered to give up her British citizenship if US judges grant her bail.

Maxwell, 59, is being held in a New York jail on suspicion of child grooming charges.

She is accused of helping recruit girls for the paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, who died in jail in 2019.

The socialite, who was born in France but grew up in the UK, offered to renounce both citizenships to "eliminate any opportunity for her to seek refuge in those countries" her lawyer said in a court filing. It is her third attempt to be granted bail.

She is awaiting trial on charges of child sex abuse, grooming and perjury. She denies all the allegations.



RAPIST John Worboys

Sex attacker Worboys in appeal loss

BY TOM PETTIFOR
Crime Editor

BLACK cab rapist John Worboys has lost an appeal against his jail term.

Worboys, 63, was given a minimum prison term of six years in 2019.

The Lord Chief Justice rejected his claim that this was "excessive".

Worboys also argued the 2019 judge was wrong to impose a life sentence as he was already in jail and could only be freed if the Parole Board found it safe.

He had been jailed in 2009 for 19 sex offences.

A decision to free him in 2018 was reversed after an outcry, which led to additional terms for attacks on four more women.

Lawyer Richard Scorer, who represented 11 of the victims, said yesterday's decision was "absolutely the right one".