

**PRESS RELEASE 17/32**  
**2 March 2017**

**[Spit Happens: Loughborough University partners with key charities to increase number of stem cell donors](#)**

[Loughborough University](#), [Loughborough Students' Union](#), [Anthony Nolan](#) and the [Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign](#) (RBLC) are joining forces to try and increase the number of potential stem cell donors.

Since 1974, the Anthony Nolan register has made 15,000 stem cell transplants possible but it's still the case that only 60% of individuals in need of a transplant find the best possible life-saving match they need; this figure drops dramatically to just 20% if you are from a black, Asian or ethnic minority background.

On Wednesday 15 March there will be multiple sites across the Loughborough campus in which individuals aged 16-30 can complete a short form, provide a saliva sample, and join the register.

The 'Spit Happens' event is being supported by University staff and student volunteers to guide potential donors through the registration process. It also aims to break the national record for the number of registrations carried out in one day, which currently stands at 1,404.

Professor Steve Rothberg, Pro Vice Chancellor of Research at Loughborough University, received a life-saving stem cell donation through Anthony Nolan after being diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia (AML) in 2009. He commented: "None of us likes to think that we might suffer a serious illness like a blood cancer but that's exactly what happened to me. Anthony Nolan found me a donor. They saved my life. They did the same for my friend Rik Basra. We are both grateful beyond words that our donors, both strangers, gave this incredible gift to save our lives.

"This event will be a real celebration of Loughborough pulling together to showcase the vital work of Anthony Nolan and RBLC in supporting individuals and their families affected by blood cancer."

Rik Basra, who also received a stem cell donation via Anthony Nolan in 2011, founded the Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign to raise awareness of blood cancers and encourage informed registrations to the stem cell register. He added: "I'm absolutely thrilled to be working with Loughborough University and the Students' Union on what is set to be a landmark event.

"We aim to recruit stem cell donors in record breaking numbers but the real target will, of course, be to save lives."

Urging registrations from a diverse range of people, Ann O'Leary, Head of Register Development at Anthony Nolan, said: "Anyone aged 16-30 and in good health can join the Anthony Nolan register, but we especially need more young men and people from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds to come forward.

“By diversifying the register and increasing the number of potential lifesavers, we hope to find a match for everyone in need of a stem cell transplant.”

Chris Lane, a former student at Loughborough University who went on to donate his stem cells, said: “In all honesty, it is one of those things you do and don't think too much more about, or appreciate that one day you may get a call to be a lifesaver. I had never thought about how I would feel or react to being told that I was required to donate, but when it happened I felt a sense of pride. I had no second thought but to follow through with whatever was needed.”

He added: “It makes it so real as to why donating is important, that there is someone in desperate need. I feel so invested in their journey and really wish that the recipient makes a full recovery. Life is the best gift you could ever give someone, so my fingers are always crossed.”

Further information on eligibility requirements and the registration process is available on the Anthony Nolan [website](#) and the University's dedicated [event page](#).

## ENDS

### Notes for editors:

Loughborough University is equipped with a live in-house broadcast unit via the Globelynx network. To arrange an interview with one of our experts please contact the press office on 01509 228697. Bookings can be made online via [www.globelynx.com](http://www.globelynx.com)

Loughborough is one of the country's leading universities, with an international reputation for research that matters, excellence in teaching, strong links with industry, and unrivalled achievement in sport and its underpinning academic disciplines.

It has been awarded five stars in the independent **QS Stars** university rating scheme, putting it among the best universities in the world, and was named the best in the country for its student experience in the **2016 THE Student Experience Survey**. Loughborough was ranked 4th in the **Guardian University League Table 2017** and 7th in **The UK Complete University Guide 2017** and was also named **Sports University of the Year** by The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017.

Loughborough is consistently ranked in the top twenty of UK universities in the Times Higher Education's 'table of tables' and is in the top 10 in England for research intensity. In recognition of its contribution to the sector, Loughborough has been awarded seven **Queen's Anniversary Prizes**.

In September 2015 the University opened an additional academic campus in London's new innovation quarter. **Loughborough University London**, based on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, offers postgraduate and executive-level education, as well as research and enterprise opportunities.

### About Anthony Nolan

Anthony Nolan saves the lives of people with blood cancer. The charity uses its register to match potential stem cell donors to blood cancer and blood disorder patients in need of stem cell transplants. It also carries out pioneering research to increase stem cell transplant success, and supports patients through their transplant journeys. Every day Anthony Nolan gives three people a second chance at life. Find out more at [www.anthonynolan.org](http://www.anthonynolan.org)

### **Note to sub editors**

Please note that Anthony Nolan changed its name in 2001 and is no longer known as Anthony Nolan Trust.

### **What is a stem cell transplant?**

If a patient has a condition that affects their bone marrow or blood, then a stem cell transplant may be their best chance of survival. Doctors will give new, healthy stem cells to the patient via their bloodstream, where they begin to grow and create healthy red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets.

### **Key statistics**

- About 2,000 people in the UK need a stem cell transplant from a stranger every year
- 90% of donors donate through PBSC (peripheral blood stem cell collection). This is a simple, outpatient procedure similar to giving blood
- We need more young men to sign up, as they are most likely to be chosen to donate but make up just 15% of the register
  - We need more people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds to sign up. Only 60% of transplant recipients receive the best match. This drops dramatically to around 20% (one in five of transplant recipients) if you're from a Black, Asian or ethnic minority background.
- It costs £60 to add each new donor to the register so we always need financial support
- To join the Anthony Nolan register, you must be 16-30 and healthy. Anthony Nolan's world-leading Research Institute has shown younger donors offer better survival rates for patients.

### **For all media enquires contact:**

Kristy Diaz  
Communications Officer  
Marketing and Advancement  
Loughborough University  
T: 01509 222224  
[www.lboro.ac.uk](http://www.lboro.ac.uk)  
@lborouniPR