



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER



NEW CAMPAIGN LEICESTERSHIRE UNITES IS LAUNCHED TO SAVE LIVES

- Leicestershire's three universities join forces to run region's biggest-ever drive to recruit potential lifesavers
- Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign aims to set a new record for the number of people joining the Anthony Nolan Stem Cell Register
- Campaign kicks off on January 30 at De Montfort University Leicester (DMU)

LEICESTER, UK – A new campaign has been launched to harness the power of Leicestershire's three universities to recruit more lifesaving stem cell donors.

The University of Leicester, Loughborough University and De Montfort University have joined forces to create Leicestershire UNites in partnership with the Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign.

Each university will host a recruitment drive to add more names to the UK's stem cell register, to help find potentially lifesaving matches for people with blood cancer.

The total number of people recruited by the three universities, together with sixth form colleges in Leicestershire, will be added up at the end of the year. Organisers are hoping to set a new record for the number of people on the register – and make Leicestershire the stem cell capital of the UK.

The aim of the campaign is to add more names to the UK's stem cell register, helping to find potentially lifesaving matches for people with blood cancer, by hosting recruitment drives.

De Montfort University Leicester (DMU) will be holding its event on Tuesday, January 30. Students, staff and members of the local community aged 16-30 are being urged to come to campus on the day to join up between 10am and 6pm.

Joining the register could not be easier – all it takes is a simple cheek swab and a few details. Specially-trained volunteers will be on hand to guide people through the process which takes less than 10 minutes.

Loughborough University [held its recruitment drive in March 2017](#), where it signed up more than 2,000 people to the stem cell register, smashing the national record for the number of stem cell donors recruited in one day at a university.

Rik, whose life was saved when a match was found for him on the stem cell register, said: “Working with the big-hearted community of Leicester and Leicestershire we’ve recruited thousands to the Anthony Nolan stem cell register. Our latest drive ‘Leicestershire Unites’ brings together all three local universities and a number of sixth form colleges in a coordinated approach.

“We want everyone to know just how simple and straightforward it is to sign-up and potentially save a life. Working together with our partners we intend to push local awareness and understanding to unprecedented levels, which we hope will in-turn boost registration numbers to record levels, we’re very excited!”

Students’ unions at DMU, Leicester and Loughborough are all supporting the Leicestershire UNites campaign and will be working hard to ensure as many students join the register as possible.

Ahtesham Mahmood, President of DSU, said: “We are extremely excited, and honoured, to be kick-starting Leicestershire UNites at De Montfort Students’ Union (DSU) later this month.

“As a Pharmaceutical and Cosmetic Science graduate myself, stem cell research is a cause close to my heart, and being one of the team leaders last time we broke the record for donors, I can’t wait to continue that great work at DMU.

“The university is renowned for welcoming people from all backgrounds, and through Leicestershire UNites we will be using our rich, diverse student base from across the world to create an impact right here in our county – or even beyond.

“This isn’t just a student engagement initiative, this is about welcoming the community to DMU and saving lives.”

The campaign has been backed by Leicester's Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, Leicestershire County Council chairman Nick Rushton and Leicestershire Police's chief constable Simon Cole.

Simon Cole – Chief Constable Leicestershire Police said:

“Leicestershire Unites is the latest in a whole series of remarkable stem cell recruitment drives coordinated by the Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign and our three local universities. Given the target audience is 16-30 it makes absolute sense to form such a ground-breaking alliance which also includes a number of sixth form colleges. The aim is to make Leicester and Leicestershire the stem cell capital of the UK. Each person signed-up could of course save a life and the real winners of course will be blood cancer patients. I wish the drive every success and would encourage Leicester and Leicestershire to unite behind it!”

Cllr Nick Rushton Leader Leicestershire County Council

“I am absolutely delighted to be supporting the ‘Leicestershire Unites’ campaign to sign-up potential lifesaving stem cell donors. It is a truly remarkable collaboration which includes the Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign, all three local Universities and numerous colleges and indeed many others. Blood cancer is indiscriminate and devastates whole families; it can leave many feeling totally helpless. Leicestershire Unites shows that we can fight back against this awful disease. I would encourage everyone to support the drive and if you're between 16-30 please go along to an event and sign-up, you could save a life.”

Professor Paul Boyle President & Vice-Chancellor University of Leicester

“We are delighted to partner with our fellow Leicestershire universities, De Montfort University and Loughborough University, in establishing the new Leicestershire UNites campaign. This truly collaborative venture is a fantastic example of how our local universities work together to make a tangible impact on the lives of our local community and beyond.

“The Anthony Nolan Trust conducts vital work in stem cell research that Rik Basra has dedicated great effort towards and we are proud to have supported the Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign for many years now. With ground-breaking research into blood cancer treatment led by academics here at Leicester, it is particularly fitting that staff and students of the University of Leicester are so engaged with this campaign. I encourage everyone to get involved with the campaign and help save countless lives for many years to come.”

Sir Peter Soulsby Leicester City Mayor

“Blood cancer is the 3rd biggest cancer killer in the UK and finding a lifesaving stem cell match is still like ‘searching for a needle in a haystack’. I’m so proud that locally we’ve already done so much to fight this awful disease. Leicester and Leicestershire is now second only to London for stem cell recruitment in the whole of the UK. But with finding a match so difficult we need to do more. ‘Leicestershire Unites’ brings together a unique collaboration between our three local universities, Anthony Nolan and local blood cancer charity The Rik Basra Leukaemia Campaign. Please support this lifesaving initiative, look out for one of the ‘Leicestershire Unites’ recruitment events... if you’re 16-30 please take 10 minutes to sign-up, you could one day save a life.”

Professor Bob Allison, Vice-Chancellor, Loughborough University

“We’re delighted to be supporting the Leicestershire UNites campaign. We recruited an additional 2,056 donors to the Anthony Nolan register in 2017 at Loughborough through our Spit Happens campaign, and I’m sure that by harnessing the power of our three universities we will be able to boost the number of potential lifesavers even further.”

Professor Dominic Shellard, Vice-Chancellor of De Montfort University

“De Montfort University has made a significant contribution to this campaign over the past four years, working with the local community and the student body to encourage people to join the stem cell register in large numbers. This in turn has helped raise awareness of blood cancer and how it can be fought. “We are very proud that some of our staff and students have been matches for people fighting leukaemia. By working together with universities across Leicestershire, we can encourage even more people to sign-up to the register and offer hope to people with blood cancer.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

For interviews please contact Kas Basra on 07985 804771 or email kas.basra@gmail.com

Interview opportunities at DMU event:

- a member of staff who joined the register and was found to be a match for a child is happy to speak about her experience to promote importance of the register
- Rik Basra, whose life was saved by a match found on the Anthony Nolan register
- Students who have been trained to become Anthony Nolan lifesavers
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