

Plea for cell donations

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A COUPLE from Buckden are fronting a campaign asking blood donors to give platelets after an unknown donor saved their baby son's life.

Their son, Ollie, was born with a rare, pre-leukaemia condition and needed platelet donations - the cells help blood to clot - at three weeks old and ultimately a bone marrow transplant.

For nearly a year, they barely had two days together without needing to be in hospital. And now, 20 months on, little Ollie still has monthly check-ups.

Jo and Jon Oldham, who live in the Osiers, are calling on blood donors to give at least 10 platelet donations this year - as part of a new campaign run by the Blood Donation Service.



Baby Ollie needed platelets to keep alive. He is seen here with mum Jo.

Mrs Oldham, 35, told The Hunts Post: "I really knew hardly anything about platelets even though we had both been blood donors for years. We feel blessed that the local hospital was able to help us and our GP realised what Ollie's condition meant.

"He sent us straight to Hinchingbrooke and Ollie had his first transfusion that night."

The baby then went to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge for two months and then Great Ormond Street in London for five months with his parents staying with him.

At eight months old, he had a bone marrow transplant.

Mrs Oldham added: "He is now doing really well. It's incredible. We didn't think we would ever get this far. We feel blessed that the local hospital could keep him well enough to have the transplant. We feel very lucky that there was a matching bone marrow because other people are not that lucky."

The couple have been able to thank the donor who gave the bone marrow, but only anonymously. All they know is that she is a woman aged 42.

"We think about the person every day," Mrs Oldham said. "She doesn't know us and has no reason to know us but she has made such a difference."

The family have since had a second baby, Harry, now aged just two weeks.

Platelets are tiny blood cells that help blood to clot and are often used in the treatment of cancer and leukaemia patients.

Baby Ollie needed 100 units of lifesaving blood products at just three weeks old when he was diagnosed with myelodysplasia, a rare pre-leukaemia condition. Straight away he needed a platelet transfusion as his count was only eight - almost non-existent.

Mrs Oldham said: "It was a frightening time for us as the experts at Great Ormond Street Hospital had never seen another baby with his condition.

"Platelet transfusions every three days and blood transfusions every three weeks kept Ollie alive while doctors decided the best course of treatment."

Ollie received a successful bone marrow transplant in February last year after a search for a suitable donor on the bone marrow register.

"Without blood, platelets and the bone marrow transplant my little boy wouldn't be here today."

The Oldhams have helped to launch the "Come here ofTEN" campaign asking donors to book in to give on at least 10 occasions each year to keep stocks healthy.

INFORMATION: The centre for collecting platelets in the East of England is at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge. To find out more or to arrange a platelet count test call the NBS Cambridge Donor Clinic Suite on 01223 548001.