

## Parents' New Year wish is a gift of life for children

[Jan 1 2008](#) by David Higginson, Liverpool Daily Post

In the final part of our Inspiration Series, the family of two children in desperate need of bone marrow transplants appeal for help for their battling youngsters. David Higginson reports

SALLY WRIGHT will start the New Year today in the same way she ended the last – with the plight of her two children at the forefront of her mind.

The names Ella and Sam Wright have become well known across Merseyside in the last two years.

Publicity has been pretty much the only weapon the Wrights have at their disposal to try to save their children.

Ella, six, and Sam, four, both need life-saving bone marrow transplants to cure a rare genetic condition.

Both children have a weakened immune system caused by the condition called common variable immunodeficiency (CVID) which leaves them highly vulnerable to infections and viruses.

After two years of searching for those perfect matches – and enlisting thousands of Merseysiders on to the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Register which tries to find bone marrow matches – Sally, of Southport, knows the odds are against them.

But she is refusing to give up hope.

She said: "All we need is for one special person with the same tissue type as Ella and Sam to join the register.

"It sounds easy but we don't know who that person is or where they live so it is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

"All we can do is hope that people will step forward and, even if they aren't a match for our children, they could be that special person for the thousands of others who are also waiting.

"We know that we can't go on like this forever. There will come a point where a transplant is Ella and Sam's only hope. We are playing a waiting game."



The fact that Sam and Ella go into 2008 without a match lined up is a particular blow for the Wright family, who though a match had been found in October.

In a tragic twist of fate, a French woman on an international register was not the 100% match doctors on the continent first thought.

Doctors are due to review the registers globally later this month and have been impressed at how Ella and Sam have fought the odds.

They take a cocktail of drugs every day to keep at bay viruses and bugs which healthy people would be able to fight easily.

As it is, Ella and Sam are fighting their condition so well that doctors still only want to give them a perfect match, rather than an 80% match which could fail.

The childrens' father Damian said: "We have been told that most of those tested again are an eight out of 10 match – what they are looking for is a 10 out of 10 match.

"They will only use a less than perfect match if the children get very ill and they have no other option open to them.

"It really is a waiting game. We are lucky that Sam and Ella have not been as unwell as everyone expected them to be, but we know we are on borrowed time."

And the fact they have gone into new year without that vital match has prompted the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust to make a fresh appeal for donors.

A campaign backed by the Liverpool Daily Post's sister paper, the Liverpool ECHO, led to an extra 2,500 people registering in a fortnight.

Since then, bone marrow donor sessions have been held in all manner of venues, from dental surgeries and school nurseries to offices and community centres.

Perhaps the grandest venue of all was Liverpool Cathedral.

Sally added: "I am so pleased that people are realising the importance of joining the bone marrow register. It is such a small thing to do when you think that you, personally, could actually save a life."

Celebrities have queued up to raise awareness on behalf of Ella and Sam. The likes of Big Brother's Craig Phillips swam with sharks to raise awareness, while Ella and Sam were also invited on to the set of Hollyoaks, where members of the cast also signed up to the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust.

The high-profile publicity campaign aimed at getting Ella and Sam that match has already helped save other lives.

Rev Martin Abrams, an Ainsdale minister, signed up to help Ella and Sam but was found to be a match for someone else on the register.

And Anthony Nolan Trust spokeswoman Alex Frasier said the siblings' best hope now was that more people would follow suit.

Alex said: "The greatest gift you could give is the gift of life.

"Bone marrow donors save lives. For New Year, or as a late Christmas present, could you give someone the gift of life? That's what we want people to ask themselves.

"Less than 30% of patients find a donor in their own family so they are totally reliant on the bone marrow register. However, there is an urgent need for more volunteers to sign up as potential donors.

"Each year many patients die, unable to find a suitable matching donor."

POTENTIAL donors need to be aged between 18 and 40 and in good health to join the Anthony Nolan Trust register. Call 0901 8822234 for an information pack, complete a medical form and a blood sampling kit will be sent to your GP. Log on to [www.anthonynolan.org.uk/](http://www.anthonynolan.org.uk/) in the UK or [www.bmdw.org/](http://www.bmdw.org/) to find bone marrow registers from around the world. If you are aged 40-44 call the British Bone Marrow Registry on 0845 771 1711.