

Donors needed to boost John's survival chance

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The residents of the Royal Stud were used to much shorter odds in their racing careers.

But now aides at Sandringham have launched a search to find a donor for a stable hand who needs a bone marrow transplant, against odds of more than 100,000-1.

John Reid, 45, has been diagnosed with the bone cancer Hodgkins lymphoma for the fourth time. Doctors say his only chance of leading a normal life is to find a match who can donate their bone marrow.



A special clinic for would-be donors is being held at Sandringham next week in the hope of finding a match.

"It's important people register as it gives people like me another chance," said father-of-two Mr Reid, who lives in Dersingham. "The more who sign up, the more people on the register who might match a patient.

"Even if those attending can't help me, they may be able to help someone else. It must be such a great feeling of satisfaction knowing that you have been able to help a person in a way no one else is able to."

The Anthony Nolan Trust recruits bone marrow donors and puts them in touch with people who need transplants. Yesterday, it said there were 7,000 people on its books in the UK who were looking for a match. Without it, some may die.

Debby Jepps, the trust's donor recruitment manager, said: "We are always in need of more donors to come forward. It is so important if you are eligible to join the register to think seriously about it.

"The more people we have registering, the more chance we have of finding those life-saving matches for patients that desperately need them.

"We are delighted to be working with the employers from the Sandringham Estate and are grateful for their help and support in our life-saving work."

Stephen Mason, from King's Lynn, is one of the longest-serving donors on the register. He joined the trust in the 1970s and found a patient he matched with last year.

"It's like winning the lottery without getting the money," he said. "The chances are so small of ever being a match that I was really proud I could help.

"I did have mixed emotions, I was a bit scared, but I was also aware the recipient was on his last chance and I was his only hope.

"If I wasn't found to be a match then the patient most probably would have died. I did suffer from achy joints and headaches but it is nothing worse than a bad cold and I would do it again without hesitation."

Mr Reid, who was awarded a Royal Victorian Medal for long service by the Queen, said he missed working on the estate, where he has worked for 29 years since leaving school. With his immune system in a fragile state because of his illness, he dare not go near horses and other animals.

"I'm a bit of a Swiss Army knife up there, I drive the horse box, do tractor work," he said. "I miss going to work; day-time telly's not what it could be."

The clinic is being held at Sandringham Visitor Centre restaurant, on the Royal Estate, from 4.30-7.30pm on Wednesday, March 19. For more information on becoming a donor, call 0207 284 1234.