

## Rhiannon's gift of life

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A LONDON-IRISH girl born with a medical condition never before encountered by doctors has been given the gift of life by an anonymous donor.

Rhiannon Fuller, whose grandparents hail from Limerick and Kerry, is the only known person in the world suffering from both cystic fibrosis and aplastic anaemia.

Mum Marie Galvin, who lives in Harlesden, North West London, described the journey her six-year-old daughter has faced since birth.



She said: "She was diagnosed at four months with cystic fibrosis and she has been in hospital every three months since she was born with chest infections.

"Then in January this year she went in for normal IVF antibiotics and when they do this procedure they have to have a blood test done every three days.

"And when they were doing the full blood count it showed that Rhiannon had no platelets or anything in her blood.

"Eventually a bone marrow biopsy aspiration was performed and they found her bone marrow was completely empty."

Rhiannon was rushed by ambulance to Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children where she was diagnosed with aplastic anaemia - a condition often referred to as bone marrow failure.

Marie said: "Great Ormond Street had never had another child with both illnesses at the same time and they said as far as they know she was the only child in the world. So they didn't have any way of knowing how to treat her. Everything they did was trial and error."

Rhiannon was also forced to undergo a white blood cell transfusion to help her to fight the infections, but ultimately it was an anonymous bone marrow donor that would become the young girl's saviour.

Marie said: "She needed a bone marrow transplant but no family member was compatible. So she went on the national bone marrow donor register and they couldn't find a match, so eventually they put her at the top of the list as an emergency.

"And amazingly they found a 41-year-old man in London and she had the bone marrow transplant performed."

This year has been a trying one for Rhiannon - who has been a hospital patient for the best part of four months - from the beginning of January to the middle of April.

Since returning home she has had a number of other serious infections but she is finally improving and is now thrilled that her hair is starting to grow back.