

Dad is a lifesaver - after 20-year wait

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By Sinead Keller

A DAD from Coventry has saved a stranger's life after an amazing 20 years on a donors' register.

Gil Lewis, aged 42, had forgotten that he was registered with the Anthony Nolan Trust as a bone marrow donor.

But three months ago he received a letter from the trust telling him that they had found a patient with a possible tissue match.

He's now just had an operation to help a woman with leukaemia.

Gil, of Second Avenue, Copsewood, Coventry, said: "The letter was completely out of the blue, and for them to finally find a match after 20 years is amazing.

"I went for further tests and then to a clinic in London last week for the operation and apparently the patient, a middle-aged lady suffering from leukaemia, is doing really well.

"It is an incredible feeling knowing that you have saved someone's life and incredible to think that because of you they will have a few more years to live."

Since the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust was set up in 1974, it has helped 5,800 adults and children suffering from leukaemia.

Gil, who works at the George Fischer distribution centre in Walsgrave, signed up when a colleague told him about a relative who needed a donor.

Now he hopes he can encourage others to sign up and save a life.

Gil, who lives with wife Lesley, 41, nine-year-old daughter Sian, and 15-year old son Liam, said he was back on his feet just hours after the operation.

He said: "People shouldn't be afraid of becoming a donor, the procedure is really simple and all I have to show for it is a tiny scar the size of a pin prick, on my lower back.

"If I got the chance to donate again I would. And I hope that if any of my family or friends ever needs the operation, there will be somebody there to do the same thing."

Alex Frazier from the Trust said: "Gil has done an amazing thing by giving the chance of life to a complete stranger. Without his donation the patient wouldn't have survived.

"We get around 1,000 requests for donors each year and we can't find a tissue match for all of them.

"That's why we are urgently encouraging people to come forward as donors as the more people we have signed up, the more chance we have of finding a match."