

Stephen McLennon, 33, from Wolverhampton jumped at the chance to be part of the B Positive choir. Stephen says "It is a great opportunity to be part of a very important campaign to raise awareness for sickle cell which many people don't know about and to also encourage people to give blood."

Stephen also carries the sickle cell trait and has three cousins with the full condition. His cousins have all been hospitalised due to the condition with one cousin Ricky needing blood many times. Ricky, was Stephen's inspiration for joining the choir, along with other friends who have shared stories of losing their relatives to sickle cell.

Stephen adds "Through the choir I have met so many people with Sickle Cell, many of them need blood so they can live with the condition. I learned much more than I originally knew about the condition and noticed how severe it can be for some. I've always thought giving blood was a good thing to do but never quite got around to doing it before and didn't realise how much of a shortage there was for donors, especially those of African and Caribbean Heritage. I have now given my first donation and didn't realise how simple it would be. The staff really looked after me and we had some jokes while they helped me get a photo to show the choir and my cousins!"

As the choir goes from strength to strength Stephen is proud to be involved and help educate more people from his community about the importance of giving blood.

He says "I always thought blood could be given to anyone with the appropriate blood type, I didn't understand how people with sickle cell needed blood that is more closely matched to them. I have also learned through this experience that sickle cell doesn't only affect Black people, but also people from Greece, Spain and parts of Asia. It was surprising that at my blood donation session that I was the only ethnic minority present and speaking with the nurses they shared that there is a significantly lower percentage of Black and Asian blood donors. I hope this campaign can help bring some improvement.

"I now know how important it is that we get our message across to everyone just how vital giving blood is. It would be so good if we were to win Britain's Got Talent but the main thing is that people understand the need to get out there to GIVE BLOOD and SAVE A LIFE"

