

NHSBT BOARD

May 2021 Patient/Donor Story

Status: Official

Darren Buttrick is Head of Business Sales at O2 and lives in Staffordshire. At 48 years old, he was healthy and had no underlying health conditions but on 17th March 2020, Darren tested positive for COVID-19.

Darren was rushed into hospital 3 days later with an extremely high temperature and not able to breathe, which he describes as like being strangled. He didn't realise how ill he was until he was told the only option to save his life was ventilation and being put into an induced coma. Even then with only a 50/50 chance of survival. It was very scary and confusing when Darren was told he had 15 minutes to phone his family to let them know. Darren does not remember much about this time until waking from a coma to see his wife on FaceTime, after a nurse used her personal phone to call her. He was finally discharged after spending 10 days in the ICU.



NHSBT contacted Darren to ask him if he would consider donating his plasma and in April last year, he made his first donation. Cut to 26th April 2021 when Darren gave his first Plasma For Medicines donation and his 25th plasma donation overall, a year and one day from the date of his first donation. Darren also received his 50-donor certificate to thank him.

Following the end of the trials to donate convalescent plasma for COVID, he is

now donating Plasma For Medicines, to help provide life-saving and life-enhancing medicines for people who depend on these treatments.

Darren says the whole experience has made him more determined to help and give back. He wants to continue donating and supporting the Plasma For Medicines initiative. Darren has shared his story to promote donation for NHSBT on outlets including ITV Good Morning Britain, Sky News, and the BBC. In addition to donating plasma, Darren also volunteers at vaccination centres on weekends and wants to take up further voluntary work at The Royal Wolverhampton Trust.

Commentary

Darren's story is compelling as it reminds us of the dedication and commitment, we see every day from our donors, who volunteer and help save lives time and time again.

Darren was one of thousands of selfless donors who donated their plasma containing high COVID antibodies despite having been ill themselves, it could then be transfused into people struggling to fight the virus as part of the REMAP-CAP and RECOVERY trials. In March 2021, the success of the convalescent plasma programme supported a Government decision to allow the use of UK plasma for the production plasma-derived medicinal products

(PDMPs) or Plasma For Medicines (PFM) following a recommendation on its safety from the MHRA. These PFMs will be supplied exclusively to the NHS for UK patients, and will be used to treat conditions such as trauma, congenital deficiencies, immunologic disorders and infections.

The UK's PFM supply is currently completely dependent on plasma collected internationally and there is a global shortage. Plasma from NHSBT's donors can now be used to meet part of the UK market demand, benefitting thousands of UK patients. Each dose of medicine is made from many different plasma donations, so we need a large number of donors to sign up to donate their plasma.

To grow and sustain the domestic supply and make us less reliant on imported plasma the Donor Experience Directorate are now looking at how we build and develop a donor base of people willing to donate plasma. We are doing this by encouraging as many people as possible to start donating, who have previously registered but not yet donated. Additionally, alongside our usual work with the press and stakeholders, we are also using our Community Engagement team to reach out to workplaces, sports clubs, community organisations and more to sign up donors.

It is because of the dedication and commitment from donors like Darren and all the people who work across the plasma journey from donor centre to the patient receiving the treatment; that we can rise to this new and exciting challenge and continue to save and improve lives.

Jayne Williams, Plasma Lead, Donor Experience

Lorraine Tresnak, Executive Assistant to CMO, Clinical Services

Gail Miflin, CMO and Director of Clinical Services

David Rose, Director Donor Experience