In 2012, we became the first stem cell register in the world to change our joining policy to include people aged 16 and 17. This was because:

- There was increasing availability of safety data for younger, related donors.
- Research showed that younger donors were associated with improved patient survival.
- This means that donor age is an important factor for transplant centres when selecting a donor, which means that younger donors are in higher demand.

After eight years of these donors helping to save lives, we wanted to make sure donors from younger age groups were equally able to handle the physical and mental demands of the donation process as their older counterparts.

**HOW DID WE DO THIS?**

This was a retrospective study looking at:

1,013 UNRELATED ANTHONY NOLAN DONORS AGED 16-31+

2 YEAR SAMPLE OF DONORS WHO DONATED BETWEEN 2015 AND 2017

134 DONORS DONATED VIA THEIR BONE MARROW

879 DONORS DONATED VIA PERIPHERAL BLOOD STEM CELL (PBSC) DONATION

Through a combination of follow-up questionnaires and clinical data stored in our database, we looked into:

HOW QUICKLY THESE DONORS WENT FROM BEING CONTACTED AS A MATCH, TO GOING ON TO DONATE

HOW MANY DONORS WERE ABLE TO DONATE THE TARGET NUMBER OF STEM CELLS

ANY SIDE EFFECTS THESE DONORS EXPERIENCE

HOW THEY RECOVERED BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

**WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?**

- YOUNG DONORS ARE AS RELIABLE AS OLDER DONORS IN RESPONDING TO VT REQUESTS.
- YOUNG DONORS ARE AS EFFECTIVE AT MOBILISING AND REACHING OPTIMAL CELL COUNTS AS OLDER DONORS FOLLOWING BOTH BONE MARROW AND PBSC DONATION.
- THERE ARE NO INCREASES IN SIDE EFFECTS OR COMPLICATIONS IN THE YOUNG DONOR POPULATION.
- THEY RECOVER WELL BOTH PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY FROM DONATION.

**CONCLUSION**

This study supports our ongoing work to encourage more young people to join the stem cell register from age 16 onwards, especially our work in schools and colleges. Our continued focus on this age group will aim to give us a better understanding of their motivations to donate and make sure we continue to provide the best possible donors for patients in need of a stem cell transplant.