



St Christopher's



in the Community

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Mrs Coulson, our Safeguarding Governor, recently donated blood at one of the regular sessions held locally. She donates her blood 3 times a year and it takes around an hour each time.

The donation process is simple but life-saving. Donors are asked to complete a Donor Safety Check form before they attend each session and, on arrival, they are provided with a consent information booklet and a large glass of water. A private health screening follows and a small drop of blood from a finger is tested to ensure the donor's haemoglobin (iron) levels are sufficient to continue with the donation for their own wellbeing. If the donor is able to give blood, they are invited to a donation chair and the donation is taken from a vein in the arm and collected in small sample tubes and a larger blood bag which are all labelled with unique id numbers. 470ml of blood is collected in 5-10 minutes. Finally, the donor is directed to the refreshment table for a drink and snack!

The donated blood is transported to a blood centre where the samples are tested to check the donor's blood group and for a number of viruses and compared to the donor's records if they've donated before. When the testing is complete and passed, the blood packs are labelled and stored ready to be issued to hospitals. One donation can help up to 3 people.

On average, 4300 donations are needed daily for both emergencies and for people who need long-term treatments.

Following their first donation, donors are informed of their blood type. Blood is also tested for subtypes and the presence of certain antibodies. For example, a rare subtype Ro, is more common in donors of Black heritage and demand for this is increasing to treat blood disorders such as sickle cell. Mrs Coulson found out that she has a relatively rare blood type (B-) and that her blood is labelled NEO (meaning neonatal) as it is suitable for newborn babies. This means that it is free of antibodies to a very common virus (cytomegalovirus) which, for most people, usually causes mild or no symptoms but is very serious for babies.

A few days after donating blood, the donor receives a text message to inform them that their blood has been issued to a named hospital. Mrs Coulson's blood usually goes to a hospital in London and she receives that text with mixed feelings - very pleased that she was able to help someone in need but sorry that it was needed in the first place and wishing the patient and their family a happy outcome following their treatment.

130 Hours Target of Volunteering

