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Family's call for stem cell bank
[Leicester Mercury]

Leicester Mercury via NewsEdge Corporation :

A national petition has been launched in Leicestershire calling for the setting up of a stem cell blood bank.

The move is being made by the family and friends of Eva Winston-Hart.

A stem cell transplant has given the three-year-old the chance of life after she was diagnosed with a rare form of leukaemia last November.

The donation came from America, where blood is harvested from umbilical cords and kept in cold storage.

Doctors opted for the stem cell treatment when a bone marrow donor could not be found following a world wide search, but only four hospitals in Britain harvest stem cell blood from umbilical cords.

Eva's mum, Amy, wants all hospitals to keep the life-saving material and create a national database.

Amy said: "Now that Eva is home we have decided to step up the campaign to build a national blood bank for stem cells from umbilical cords." Amy and friend, Cassy French, have visited the Houses of Parliament to press the case.

Amy said: "At the moment, that priceless material is being wasted in this country. Without the precious 24mls of blood from the cord that Eva received, I don't know what future my daughter would be facing.

"We have drawn up a petition which will be put in shops, medical practices and other outlets in Market Harborough.

"We shall also set up the petition online." Miss French said: "We owe Eva's life to stem cell blood from America. It is such a precious resource which is being incinerated in this country. We want to give hope to other families." London MP David Burrowes is hoping to get Parliament behind the project to set up a blood bank for stem cells from umbilical cords.

The campaign is also being supported by the Comment on Reproductive Ethics pressure group.

A spokeswoman said: "We are delighted at the progress Eva has made and support what the family are trying to achieve. Stem cells from umbilical cords have proved to

be a therapeutic treatment for many." For more information on the petition and campaign, e-mail: evawinstonhart@gmail.com

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