Charity pledges to keep more families with sick children in hospital together

Tuesday 7 January, 2020

As a new decade begins, charity The Sick Children's Trust is committing to ensure families with a seriously ill child in hospital have a warm and comfortable place to stay when they need it most.

Around 2.1 million children are admitted to hospital every year. Often they find themselves in a city far away from home in order to receive the care they need. The Sick Children's Trust is the charity that gives families with a seriously ill child in hospital a comfortable place to stay and a friendly ear to listen in one of its ten 'Homes from Home'.

Over the last ten years, the charity has kept over 33,000 families together. One of these is Eva O'Brien's, from Pinner, who was born ten weeks early in 2013, weighing 525 grams. At a few hours old, Eva was rushed to The Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel for lifesaving surgery on her oesophagus which wasn't connected properly to her stomach. Her parents, Claire and Eddi, were given a place to stay at The Sick Children's Trust's Stevenson House, just minutes from Eva's incubator, which meant they could be with her anytime, day or night. **Claire said:**

"In times of crisis you never forget those that step in to support. This can certainly be said of our amazing family, friends and The Sick Children's Trust especially at this time of year. This time six years ago we had just welcomed our little daughter Eva into the world, all 525g of her. There were no guarantees that she would survive and she was rushed to The Royal London Hospital. I was not able to go with Eva at this stage owing to my own recovery. We were only just a family and suddenly we were torn apart.

"When Eddi arrived at the hospital, he was greeted by a nurse who had arranged for him to have a room at Stevenson House a 'Home from Home' run by The Sick Children's Trust. It was so much more than just a room. It was our home and means of respite for 11 weeks. It was a two minute walk from the hospital which meant that neither Eddi nor I needed to commute across London. We were both astounded by the amazing facilities that allowed us to distract and normalise our lives such as cooking a meal and washing our clothes and being able to talk with other families in the living room as a means of processing our own feelings.

"I am sure that many families are keen to put these tough memories of a hospital stay behind them, but Stevenson House enabled us to make some fond memories too. The Sick Children's Trust provides the most wonderful and precious facilities to families of sick children and we will never forget them.

"Over the last six years, Eva has continued to amaze all captured by her spell. Her presence is commanding, and she has the ability to light up a room with her little personality. When we left hospital in April 2014 we knew that she would have challenges ahead of her as only time would tell what impact, if any, her prematurity and turbulent start to life would have. As we look back on the first six years of her little life, she has faced each medical and developmental challenge with the biggest smile on her face."

The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations to give families with a seriously ill child in hospital a place to stay. It costs £30 to support a family for one night. **Chief Executive, Jane Featherstone, said:**

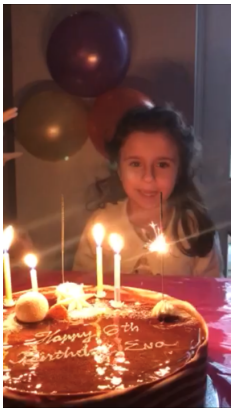
"No parent with a seriously ill child in hospital should have to worry about how they can be by their bedside. Over the last ten years we've been able to support even more families by opening three new 'Homes from Home' at the country's leading children's hospitals. This has helped an additional 1,011 families a year, giving them somewhere warm to stay and a friendly ear to listen.

"This month marks the start of a new decade, and as a charity we will continue to be there for families who find themselves with a seriously ill child in hospital, giving them a place to stay and one less thing to worry about."

For further information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit sickchildrenstrust.org

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