Dad gets ready to take on half marathon after surprise baby survives against the odds

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The dad of a baby girl, whose arrival into the world was as much of a surprise for her parents as anyone else, is lacing up his trainers in preparation for his first half marathon to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust.

Luke Darvill, 24 from Haverhill, will take on the Bedford Half on Saturday 2 September to thank The Sick Children's Trust for giving him and partner, Robyn, a 'Home from Home' in both Cambridge and London when their daughter needed lifesaving treatment in hospital.

When Daisy Pearl was born in 2015, her parents Luke and Robyn had just hours to prepare for the new addition to their family. The couple attended a doctor's appointment as they thought Robyn, 21, had appendicitis, but were shocked to find out that she was actually pregnant and in labour.

Thankfully, when Daisy was born, she was healthy and allowed to go home. However, at only two weeks old, Daisy began struggling to breathe and was rushed to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge.

Daisy was diagnosed with three holes in her heart, which were making her seriously ill and her parents were told she needed lifesaving open heart surgery to give her a chance of survival. During this time, The Sick Children's Trust supported the couple with free 'Home from Home' accommodation just minutes away from their daughter's hospital bedside. **Dad Luke, who works as a Logistics Co-ordinator for Northgate Foods in Bury St. Edmunds, says:**

"In a matter of weeks our lives had changed. We had no idea that Daisy was on the horizon and all of a sudden Robyn was not only pregnant, but also in labour and giving birth to our baby. We weren't prepared at all, but as soon as we set our eyes on our baby daughter, we were love struck and couldn't wait to get the next chapter of our lives started. She completed our little family.

"We had been at home for two weeks before Daisy became seriously unwell. We were told her heart wasn't working properly - it was terrifying to think that something we loved so much could be taken away from us. We didn't know how long she would be in hospital for and I had no idea about where we would stay while she underwent this major treatment. But thankfully we were told about The Sick Children's Trust and the free 'Home from Home' accommodation the charity offers.

"We were so relieved to be given a set of keys and our own room. To know we had somewhere to stay, completely free of charge, right next to our baby was such a comfort when it felt like our whole world was falling apart."

"For two months we were supported by the charity's Acorn House. It was amazing – Daisy never had to be without one of us by her side and we didn't have to worry about how we were going to be able to afford to stay with her. In the most distressing time of our lives, The Sick Children's Trust was there for us every day. Sadly, during this time Daisy took a turn for the worse and had to be transferred to Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH).

"We were so scared that we were going to be separated from our baby as her little body was put through open heart surgery. But again, The Sick Children's Trust were there for us. The charity organised for us to stay in another 'Home from Home' which they ran in London called Guilford Street House – and again we were given a warm welcome by the House Manager Tina, who took us in and gave us a lovely home close to our daughter's bedside."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, giving families with seriously ill children free accommodation just minutes from their child's hospital bedside. It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night in a 'Home from Home'. The charity supported Luke and Robyn with free accommodation in Acorn House, Cambridge, and Guildford Street House, London, when Daisy underwent lifesaving treatment. Now, two years on, Daisy is doing really well and has started nursery. **Mum Robyn, who had no idea she was pregnant with Daisy until the day before she was born, adds:**

"Guilford Street House was just like Acorn House, where we had become so comfortable. When we first arrived in London we were exhausted with worry. Daisy was so very poorly and it was breaking our

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hearts to see her fighting for her life. The House Manager, Tina, welcomed us with a huge amount of love and care. She was so interested in how Daisy was and the journey we'd been on. Tina became like family: a huge support we needed at such a traumatic time. And to say thank you on behalf of our family, Luke really wanted to do a sponsored challenge this year. When we saw that the Bedford Half was partially in aid of The Sick Children's Trust it was the perfect fit."

The Bedford Half Marathon and Mini Miles takes place on Saturday 2 September and encourages participants to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust, which relies entirely on voluntary donations. **Elisa Cappello-Dowd, Community Fundraising Manager, says:**

"Everyone at The Sick Children's Trust is thrilled to hear that Daisy is getting on really well now and has made an incredible recovery. We'd also like to say a big thank you to Luke for choosing to do the Bedford Half Marathon for The Sick Children's Trust. As a charity, it costs us £30 to support a family for one night so the money he raises will make a huge difference. We wish him the best of luck!"

To read more about Daisy Pearl's story and Luke's fundraising mission, please visit his fundraising page at: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/luke-darvill

To sign up for the Bedford Half and run for The Sick Children's Trust, please visit: www.sickchildrenstrust.org.

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