

Dad honours daughter's memory in 10K race to support Francis House Children's Hospice

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A dad who had never participated in a 10k race before raised almost £750 to support the charity that gave his family final precious moments with their one-year-old daughter Aria.

Terry Farish, Aria's dad, and Adam Barker, her uncle, ran the Heaton Park 10k in aid of Francis House Children's Hospice, a place they described as 'wrapping our family in love and care when life became unbearably hard'.

Francis House Children's Hospice supports the families of children and young people with life-limiting conditions providing the one-to-one support they need in their most challenging times. Manchester based Francis House, is the official charity partner of the Run Heaton Park series of 5k, 10k and half marathon races held within the 600 acres of parkland.

Terry said: "At the start line I was nervous, training runs were one thing, but keeping pace under pressure is a whole different beast. The first hill hit harder than I expected. When I saw my family holding the "Go Terry" sign it took everything in me not to crack right there.

"On the second lap the hill nearly floored me, but then I thought about Aria, how even in her final moments, she never stopped fighting for each breath. That thought hits me every time it gets hard. She didn't get to choose to stop fighting. I do, and that's what keeps me moving forwards, knowing that if she could fight through that, I can fight through this."

In March this year, Aria was diagnosed with POLG, a life-limiting genetic disorder for which there is no known cure. Doctors explained to her parents, Terry, and Pooja, that the condition was like having a faulty battery; Aria's body was unable to replenish the energy in her cells to keep her alive.

The family were transferred from hospital to Francis House Children's Hospice on August 8. The next morning with the sun shining through the curtains, Aria died surrounded by love in a comfortable homely environment.

In the days that followed, Terry and Pooja were supported by the hospice team, staying in one of the family flats and spending time with Aria in the Rainbow Room.

Pooja said: "Being at Francis House at that time was like a home from home when we couldn't get home. The doctors thought Aria didn't have enough time to get home to Barrow so when Francis House said she could come here we were so relieved. It was the environment we wanted for our bright little girl when she passed away.

"We felt supported as well. If we didn't have Francis House available at the end I don't know how we would have coped.

"We sat with the two nurses at Francis House and it felt like we had family with us, we didn't feel completely alone.

"We held Aria during her very difficult time but Francis House held us during our difficult time.

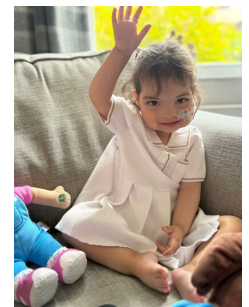
"You don't really think of children's hospices until you need them. It's not just end of life care of course; it's during life even just giving the families a break or being around others in a similar situation.

"After everything Francis House has done for us, we wanted to give back."

With purple ribbons tied to their shoes, Terry crossed the finish line in 50 minutes and 9 seconds. Adam finished fifth overall with a new personal best.

Terry said: "What started as a tune-up race became something so much bigger. Francis House isn't just a charity to us, it's where Aria spent her final days, and where we were given a home from home. The care and compassion they showed us is something I'll never forget and running for them, and for her, is my way of giving a little of that love back."

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James Ferguson, fundraiser of Francis House Children's Hospice said: "On behalf of Francis House I'd like to congratulate Terry and Adam on an incredible run. They braved the weather and hills of Heaton Park, as did all our runners. Thank you for raising vital funds in support of the hospice."

Anyone interested in raising funds for Francis House at the next Run Heaton Park event on December 7 can register here

<https://www.francishouse.org.uk/get-involved/events/run-heaton-park-5k-10k-half-marathon/>

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