# Dad to take on monumental 271 mile three day cycle to Paris to thank charity who helped his family

**Monday 23 July, 2018**

A local dad, who was supported by The Sick Children's Trust when his month old baby became seriously ill, is taking on the challenge of a lifetime by cycling from Stevenage to Paris to raise vital funds for the charity.

Russell Cooper, 34, from Coates, along with his fiancé, Kelly Slater, 31, were supported by the charity with free 'Home from Home' accommodation earlier this year whilst their baby, Jack, received lifesaving treatment in Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge. The couple were given a room at Acorn House, one of the ten 'Homes from Home' run by The Sick Children's Trust, which is located just minutes from the paediatric intensive care unit where Jack was being cared for.

Just one month earlier the proud parents had welcomed their baby boy into the world on 28 February. However, when he was just four weeks old, Russell and Kelly began to notice a change in their son. He showed symptoms of a cold, had gone off his food and seemed very sombre and sleepy. Not leaving anything to chance they rushed their baby back to A&E at Peterborough City Hospital, but whilst he was being assessed by the nurse the unthinkable happened when Jack stopped breathing. **Dad, Russell, who used to work as a policeman for the Royal Air Force and is now an administrator for a European engineering company, says:**

"Our world fell apart when Jack stopped breathing. With a slap of the red button, alarms blared. The cubicle filled with what felt like a dozen people. There were black scrubs, blue scrubs, doctors, nurses, consultants, trainees. It felt like the entire NHS was on us in a flash. It quickly became very clear that there was no room for Mummy and Daddy, so we were ushered out into another cubicle. Surgical screens were pulled across, a hive of activity surrounded our beautiful little boy. The noises, the urgency of the staff and the worst nightmares of two new parents were being realised.

"As the minutes passed and tears flowed our hugs became tighter as anxiety levels rose. What felt like a millennia passed before a nurse came into the cubicle. As she opened her mouth to speak all I could think was that Jack had gone, but as her face softened she uttered the only words we needed to hear, 'he's a lot more stable now.'"

Doctors diagnosed Jack with severe bronchiolitis, an infection which causes the smallest airways in the lungs to become infected and inflamed. He was intubated and once he was stable was transferred by the Cambridge Antenatal Transfer Service to Addenbrooke's Hospital, over an hour away from the family's home. It was on arrival at the hospital that Russell and Kelly found out about The Sick Children's Trust and were given a set of keys to Acorn House. **Dad, Russell, continues:**

"We arrived at Addenbrooke's at 1.20am the day after taking Jack into A&E, exhausted and still unsure what the future held and whether our precious baby would recover. Once he was settled on the paediatric intensive care unit and we realised we were not going to be able to stay with him the question about where we would stay arose. We didn't have to worry for long though, as a nurse told us about Acorn House and handed us a key. For the following eight days Acorn House was such a comfort to us whilst Jack recovered.

"Not having to pay for a hotel or worry about being far away from Jack made all the difference. The phones in the rooms gave us peace of mind and we were able to sleep knowing that if anything changed we could be with Jack in an instant. Also, travel would have been a nightmare, because the roadworks between Peterborough and Cambridge had doubled the journey time to two hours each way.

"Fortunately we got Jack home quickly and he is thriving, and now I'm focusing on how I would like to show our appreciation to The Sick Children's Trust. At the beginning of the Football World Cup I stupidly made a bet with a colleague that if France won I would ride from our Stevenage site to the office in Paris. So now I'm in training! The upside to me doing this is that I have an opportunity to make a difference to a lot of people who find themselves in situations like Kelly and I did, by raising money for The Sick Children's Trust. I hope to raise at least £2,000 which will provide a minimum 67 nights of accommodation for families like ours."

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. The charity relies entirely

## Media:
















## Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits ::

## Related Keywords:

Addenbrooke's Hospital :: Charity

on voluntary donations and it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

“When Russell contacted me the day after the World Cup final to tell me about his upcoming challenge and that he would use it as an opportunity to fundraise for the charity I was thrilled!

“As a charity we rely on voluntary donations so that we can continue to run our ten ‘Homes from Home’ across the country, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. The money he raises from this epic challenge will make a huge difference to many families who need our support.”

To get behind The Sick Children’s Trust and sponsor Russell visit his Just Giving page https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/illbewalkinglikejohnwayne

For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

:: Childcare :: Home From Home :: Children :: Hospital :: Family Story :: The Sick Children's Trust :: Fundraising ::

## Scan Me:

**Company Contact:**