Devoted grandfather taking on marathon challenge to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust

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A local grandad is lacing up his trainers and getting ready to run the Virgin Money London Marathon to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust as thanks for supporting his stepdaughter when her baby required lifesaving treatment miles away from home.

David Rayner, 48, from Chelmsford, is on a fundraising mission to raise £1,000 for the charity that supported his stepdaughter, Hayley Fawcett and her partner, Luke Mason, with free 'Home from Home' accommodation when their daughter Emilia-Mae was born 13 weeks early, weighing just 2lb 2oz.

When Emilia-Mae was born, she was resuscitated and rushed to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge, over an hour away from her family home in Chelmsford, for emergency treatment on the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). For three weeks Emilia-Mae fought for her life. During this time parents Hayley and Luke were never more than a few minutes from her bedside as they were supported by The Sick Children's Trust at its 'Home from Home' Chestnut House. **Grandad David, who is hoping to complete the race in five hours, says:**

"Running the London Marathon is a huge challenge for me to take on. It will be my first ever marathon and I am so proud to be running it for The Sick Children's Trust.

"When my little granddaughter entered this world, it was a very unexpected and distressing time. The Sick Children's Trust was there to support my family and we can never thank the charity enough. They gave Emilia-Mae's parents a place to stay, which enabled them to be on hand 24/7. This gave them the time and ability to fully come to terms with the situation, and because they were never more than a few metres away from her, they could watch their daughter slowly get stronger and grow day by day.

"I'm looking forward to taking on the London Marathon now; it has been a while since I have done any distance running, but I would do anything for Emilia-Mae. The pain I will endure is nothing compared to what Hayley and Emilia-Mae have been through and that thought, along with knowing the difference this money will make to another family, will push me through."

At three weeks old, Emilia-Mae was transferred back to Bromfield Hospital, and only three weeks later Hayley and Luke took their baby girl home for the first time. **Hayley, who will be cheering her stepdad along the route, says:**

"When we arrived in Cambridge, we were so disorientated and exhausted with worry. But within no time at all we met Abi from The Sick Children's Trust who came to our aid. She told us there was a room for us at a place called Chestnut House, just a floor below NICU.

"From day one, Abi was fantastic. She really helped me to cope and provided emotional support. I was a traumatised first time mum, who had given birth months too early to a very poorly baby, and she seemed to know how I was feeling. She helped me so much and was able to assist me with things like expressing milk in Chestnut House, which I could then take to Emilia-Mae. Being at Chestnut House didn't just provide us with emotional relief, but knowing that the accommodation was totally free of charge and that we didn't have to worry about money was a godsend. The charity is nothing short of amazing and I am so proud of David for what he is doing."

David is joining #TeamSCT this year to raise vital funds for The Sick Children's Trust, so that more families with seriously ill children in hospital can be just minutes from their loved one's bedside. The Sick Children's Trust relies entirely on voluntary donations to keep its ten 'Homes from Home' across the country running. **Chestnut House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

"Hayley was really devastated after Emilia-Mae was born early and I am so glad we were able to support her and Luke in Chestnut House. When your baby is so seriously ill in hospital the last thing you want is to have to leave their bedside. Giving parents like Hayley and Luke a 'Home from Home' just minutes away from their baby relieves some of the fear and pressure.

"We'd like to say a huge thank you to David for choosing to run the London Marathon to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust. It costs us £30 to support a family for one night in a 'Home from Home', so

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the money he raises will go a long was in helping us to be there for other families with seriously ill children in hospital."

To help David reach his £1,000 target, please visit:

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

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