Devoted Mum prepares to take on 100km challenge for The Sick Children's Trust

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A local Mum is lacing up her trainers to get ready for the London2Brighton challenge, where she'll run 100km from the capital to the coast, on Saturday 26 May to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust.

Jessica Hamer, 37, from Henley-on-Thames, is on a fundraising mission to raise £1,000 to thank the charity that supported her family with free 'Home from Home' accommodation when her son, Ethan, required lifesaving treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH).

Twins Rose and Ethan Ucar were born six weeks prematurely at the John Radcliffe Hospital, close to the family's home in Oxfordshire. While Rose had no health issues, her brother, Ethan, was diagnosed with a series of complex conditions. These included coronary heart disease, a serious heart defect in which his heart hadn't developed properly.

Despite these conditions, Ethan made it back home at just five weeks old, one week after his sister had been discharged. However, whilst Rose grew stronger and began to flourish, Ethan's health deteriorated and he struggled to gain weight and at six months he was admitted to Great Ormond Street Hospital, miles away home, for major heart surgery. It was during this traumatic time that Ethan's parents, Jessica and Alper, along with baby Rose, were given a room at Rainbow House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. This meant that the whole family were never more than a few minutes away from Ethan's hospital bedside. **Mum, Jessica, a Science Education Consultant, says:**

"I expected there to be health complications when the twins were born prematurely, but had never envisioned what we were about to go through. During his first six months, Ethan was admitted to hospital more times than I can remember which was so hard for us, especially as we had Rose to care for too. As a family we were often separated with Alper staying at home to look after Rose whilst I stayed with Ethan in hospital. What were supposed to be the most magical moments with our new family became the most traumatising of our lives.

"When we arrived at GOSH for Ethan's surgery we were on edge, anxious and emotionally overwhelmed. So when The Sick Children's Trust offered us a room at Rainbow House, I burst into tears. Having a 'Home from Home' meant we could both be there for Ethan and still look after Rose. We could support each other and maintain a sense of ordinary routine."

Since his lifesaving heart surgery, Ethan has made a great recovery and, for the first time in his life, was allowed to return home without medication. Now, at ten months old, Ethan has inspired his mum to take on the challenge of a lifetime. **Jessica, who hopes to raise £1,000 for The Sick Children's Trust, continues:**

"Alper and I both wanted to give something back to the charity that provided us with so much support when we needed it most. When we left Rainbow House and returned home as a family, I promised that I would do something significant to raise awareness for the charity and I thought that a 100km London2Brighton challenge ticked the box!

"I've never even completed a marathon before, let alone something like this. I've forced myself way out of my comfort zone! If I complete the race in under 20 hours I will be happy. I'm determined to make everyone proud, especially Rose and Ethan, and raise as much money as possible for this amazing cause."

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 on voluntary donations and it costs £30 to support a family for one night. **Vicki Roots, Community Fundraising Officer at The Sick Children's Trust, says:**

"Everyone at The Sick Children's Trust is so pleased to hear that Ethan is back at home and going from strength to strength. We'd like to say a huge thank you to Jessica for taking on this amazing challenge to support the charity, the money she raises will keep more families together when their child is seriously ill in hospital. We wish her the best of luck and can't wait to hear how she gets on!"

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To read more about Jessica’s fundraising mission, please visit her fundraising page at: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jess-hamer

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

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