# Dewsbury family look forward to magical Christmas at home after spending baby's first Christmas in hospital

**Wednesday 12 December, 2018**

A family from Dewsbury are looking forward to celebrating Christmas at home with their one year old son after spending it at his hospital bedside last year.

Alexander Jones was born at just 27 weeks, weighing 2lbs 6oz, at Leeds General Infirmary. His parents, Daniel and Vicky Jones, were told their son only had a 50% chance of survival and that if he did survive, he had a 50% chance of something going wrong. Alexander spent the first few weeks of his life battling for survival in Leeds. Initially Daniel had to leave his son and wife every night as there was nowhere for him to stay, but within a couple of weeks the couple were given free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Eckersley House, run by The Sick Children's Trust which supports families with seriously ill children in hospital. Daniel, who works for Lloyds Banking Group, says:

"We were robbed of the joy of becoming a mother and father and it was replaced with terrifying worry. For a week, I left Vicky and Alexander every evening at the hospital and drove to be with them every morning. It was at least a 40 minute journey each way, and the parking in Leeds was awful. It added so much stress to the situation, especially when Vicky would call to tell me Alexander really wasn't doing well.

"All you want to do is be there for your family in that moment, but the reality was that it would take me nearly two hours to be with them after driving across from Dewsbury and then trying to find a parking space. We stayed at Eckersley House for two weeks before Alexander was transferred to Pinderfields General Hospital, where we spent his first Christmas and then after two months finally took him home. Although we'd already realised how valuable Eckersley House was, we realised it even more when we had to travel back and forth every day to Pinderfields and received frightening calls in the dead of night to say Alexander wasn't OK. It was touch and go a lot of the time and for every step forward he took, he took two back. We were constantly worried that every time we left Alexander at night something terrible would happen – it was isolating having to make those journeys. At least by having a 'Home from Home' just moments away, we could always be there, no matter what, and were always surrounded by others going through something similar."

Every day, children are diagnosed with serious and life-threatening illnesses or have terrible accidents that leave them fighting for life. They often have to be transferred to specialist hospitals far from home to receive critical medical treatment. The Sick Children's Trust is there, supporting these families with free accommodation keeping them just minutes from their loved one's hospital bedside. Daniel adds:

"Having your child in hospital really takes its toll. When you're not worried about whether your child will survive, you become worried about everything else that's making them poorly. All we could do was be there for our baby and having Eckersley House really helped with that. We were able to be by Alexander's side as much as possible, holding his hand through the incubator, touching his head and feet, talking to him and giving him cuddles. Cuddles which really did a lot to help his tiny body grow stronger.

"We know that we're very lucky. A year down the line, our son is healthy and happy. We met so many other parents at Eckersley House who we know haven't been as lucky as us. While it was bad for us, we can't imagine how bad it was for them. Or how much worse it would've been had it not have been for Eckersley House.

"Alexander has just celebrated his first birthday and you'd never know how poorly he was. We're beginning to look forward to this Christmas, which will be Alexander's first spent at home. Last year, it was a huge milestone for us as he was finally allowed out of his incubator and into a cot. The incubator was a massive barrier as we couldn't pick him up without a nurse being around so it was the best Christmas present we could've asked for. But this year we will have him with us at home, opening up presents and being surrounded by family.

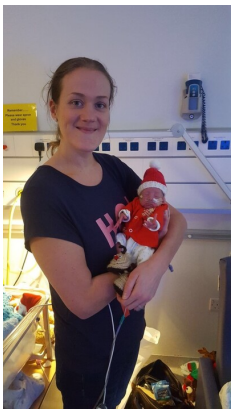
"Eckersley House made a huge difference to our time in Leeds and we're massive advocates of the charity. You just can't underestimate how beneficial it was and I'll always feel indebted to them. As a thank you, my work – Lloyds Banking Group– have been doing some fundraising for The Sick Children's Trust which has been fantastic. It's been amazing how many people have been so supportive. We hope we can do what we can to raise awareness of the charity's work and continue to support many other

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families."

This Christmas, The Sick Children's Trust expects that every room across its ten 'Homes from Home' will be full with families who are caring for some of the UK's sickest children. The charity's Christmas appeal, My Christmas Wish, aims to raise £13,230, enough to run the charity's ten 'Homes from Home' over the Christmas period, providing essential emotional and practical support to families in need. Head of Operations at The Sick Children's Trust, Joy Darling, says:

"No child should wake up on Christmas morning alone and without their family around them. But this will be the reality for many poorly children in hospital as their families face long journeys to be by their hospital bedside on the most magical day of the year.

"A donation of £30 will give a family a place to stay in one of our 'Homes from Home' this Christmas, just moments from their sick child's bedside. £30 will ensure one child in hospital will wake up on Christmas morning with their family by their side.

"It costs The Sick Children's Trust £13,230 to run its ten 'Homes from Home' across the country over the Christmas period, keeping families together at one of the most important times of the year. By donating £30 you can make a sick child's Christmas wish come true and ensure they wake up with lots of kisses and cuddles."

To donate:
• Visit The Sick Children's Trust's Christmas Wish JustGiving page:
https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/mychristmaswish
• Or call the team on 020 7638 4066
For further information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

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