Enthusiastic cyclist rides 100 miles to thank charity which supported his friends

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A keen cyclist who completed the Prudential Ride 100 last weekend is due to take on another 100 mile cycling challenge in September to fundraise for The Sick Children's Trust charity and 'Let's talk about William'.

Chris Shirley, 42, from Milton Keynes, completed the Prudential Ride London-Surrey cycle challenge on Sunday 30 July, and is due to participate in the Velo Birmingham in September. He is raising money for The Sick Children's Trust to say thank you for providing his friends with free 'Home from Home' accommodation whilst their son Joshua was seriously ill in hospital.

When Joshua was eight months old, he was diagnosed with a heart defect and required lifesaving treatment at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH). Joshua spent over six months in the specialist hospital over 30 miles away from home. But during this time, parents Catherine and Matt were never more than a few minutes away from their son's hospital bedside as they were being supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at the charity's Guilford Street and Rainbow Houses.

Five years on, Joshua is thriving and family friend Chris wants to help the charity to continue supporting families with seriously ill children in hospitals across the UK. Sunday's race was the first time the novice cyclist had taken on a 100 mile cycle challenge on a route which took cyclists past London's famous sights. **Chris says:**

"The best bit of the ride was the last 20 miles when I cycled up through Kingston and back into London – the crowds were fantastic and really kept me going. Although it was a challenge, I'm pleased to have been able to give something back to the charity which supported my friends at such a traumatic time. Having the support of The Sick Children's Trust and free 'Home from Home' accommodation meant Catherine and Matt had one less thing to worry about.

"They live in Essex so it would have been too far to travel in to London every day. It would have been emotionally and physically draining. The Sick Children's Trust's 'Homes from Home' are just minutes from the ward, so Joshua was able to recover with his family by his side."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the UK, providing emotional and practical support to families with seriously ill children in hospital. The charity has three houses based in London, two at GOSH and one at The Royal London Hospital. **Sandra Williams, Rainbow House Manager, says:**

"We'd like to say a huge thank you to Chris for taking on these cycling challenges to fundraise for us. Joshua's family stayed with us for just over six months and it's great to hear little Joshua is now doing so well! I know Chris did a lot of training for the cycle and it clearly paid off on the day - well done."

If you would like to support Chris, please visit
https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/christopher-shirley

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