Eva’s parents back charity’s chocola-tea fundraising campaign

Tuesday 29 May, 2018

The parents of a little girl who was born at just 27 weeks are encouraging the community to join in with The Sick Children’s Trust’s Big Chocolate Tea fundraising campaign.

Charlie and Ross Ferrington, from Billericay, are asking people to get involved with The Sick Children’s Trust’s Big Chocolate Tea campaign to help the charity support more families, like theirs, when their child is seriously ill in hospital.

When Eva was born she weighed just 830g and required specialist treatment at The Royal London Children’s Hospital – over 30 miles from home. Whilst Eva fought for her life on the hospital’s neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), Charlie and Ross were given free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation run by The Sick Children’s Trust. The couple were supported at the charity’s Stevenson House, located within the hospital grounds. As a result, the first time parents were never more than a few minutes away from their baby’s hospital bedside. **Eva’s Mum, Charlie, 31, says:**

“Eva became very distressed during labour, so much so that she’d actually inhaled meconium, which is extremely toxic and has the potential to cause excessive damage to a baby’s lungs. Eva was struggling to breathe and had to be ventilated as soon as she was born. It wasn’t how I’d imagined giving birth to my daughter would be like.

“A day later, I finally set eyes on Eva. We had both been too unwell to see each other, but when I did meet her it was a shocking moment. There was no fat on her at all. And she was almost see-through. She was also very tiny and only weighed 830g. Seeing her like that was a reality check and everything that had happened in the previous 24 hours hit home. It was the scariest moment of my life.

“The doctors were having problems regulating Eva’s blood pressure and they didn’t have the facilities at Basildon Hospital to look after her, therefore we needed to be transferred to The Royal London Children’s Hospital, which was miles away from home. When Ross and I finally arrived at The Royal London Hospital, we were taken to Eva who was on NICU. There, we were introduced to The Sick Children’s Trust, a charity which runs free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation for families with seriously ill children in hospital. When we were told there was a room for us at Stevenson House I burst into tears because I felt so relieved that we would be so close to Eva.

“Every day that passed felt like a trudge through mud. The hours went on forever. Eva was so small and needed a lot of help with her breathing – she was on oxygen and had tubes going up her nose. It was during these days that Stevenson House was especially important to us. We were just so close and could be with our daughter all day and all night if we wanted to be.”

Stevenson House is one of ten ‘Homes from Home’ run by The Sick Children’s Trust. Alongside 16 family bedrooms, Stevenson House has two fully equipped kitchens for families to make home-cooked meals, a playroom and full laundry facilities. The Sick Children’s Trust supports around 4,000 families with seriously ill child in hospital ever year and although the accommodation is provided free of charge, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Charlie adds:**

“Stevenson House was there for us in our time of need and kept us by our baby’s bedside. Fortunately we were discharged from The Royal London Hospital and transferred back to our local hospital when Eva was two weeks old and weighed a kilo, which was a huge milestone! But we want to encourage others to spread the word about The Sick Children’s Trust and get involved in Big Chocolate Tea by holding a cake sale or an office bake off to help another family like ours.”

Charlie and Ross are encouraging people to take part in The Sick Children’s Trust’s national fundraising campaign, Big Chocolate Tea, to raise at least £30 so that the charity can support another family for one night in a ‘Home from Home’. **Community Fundraising Officer, Vicki Roots, says:**

“Big Chocolate Tea is The Sick Children’s Trust’s biggest annual fundraiser of the year and although it takes place this month, participants can hold an event at any point during the year!

“As a charity, we rely entirely on voluntary donations to keep our ‘Homes from Home’ running to support families like Eva’s during the worst imaginable times.

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“If you would like to take part in Big Chocolate Tea – please do get in touch.”

For further information about The Sick Children’s Trust and Big Chocolate Tea please visit www.sickchildrenstrust.org/bigchoctea

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