Family continues fundraising mission for The Sick Children's Trust by joining in Big Chocolate Tea

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The family of a little girl who battled three major lung conditions at just five weeks old have added to their fundraising total for The Sick Children's Trust by holding a Big Chocolate Tea party.

Emily and Luke Smallbone, from Chessington, along with their colleagues and family, have been tirelessly fundraising for The Sick Children's Trust since they were given free 'Home from Home' accommodation by the charity when their daughter, Esmé, was rushed to a hospital miles away from home.

In 2015, Esmé was admitted to The Royal London Hospital with breathing difficulties and for four days fought for her life on a ventilator, battling bronchiolitis, rhinovirus and pulmonary interstitial emphysema. While she received lifesaving treatment on the paediatric intensive care unit, her parents and older sister, Ava, were supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Stevenson House, run by The Sick Children's Trust.

Since then, Esmé's family have come together to raise vital funds for the charity so it can continue to support more families with seriously ill children in hospital. Last year, Emily and Luke raised over £250 by holding Big Chocolate Tea events at their places of work, Featherstone Leigh and Mercedes-Benz & Smart. This year, Luke took part in the charity's biggest annual fundraiser again, raising £150 – enough to support a family for five nights in a 'Home from Home'. **Mum Emily says:**

"My family feel it's important to continue to support Big Chocolate Tea as it raises money and awareness for an amazing charity. The Sick Children's Trust will always hold a special place in our hearts and we love being part of such a fun event. The girls absolutely love baking so it's a perfect opportunity to get the mixer out!

"Esmé is two and a half now and is full of attitude, just like her older sister Ava! She never ceases to amaze us with how strong and independent she is - we started potty training her recently and she's completely dry after only two weeks!

"Big Chocolate Tea is a great way to raise money for a charity that keeps families together during the traumatic times, so if you can spare an afternoon to bake with your loved ones or can hold a party at work to raise at least £30 please do get involved!"

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, located at leading specialist paediatric hospitals. Every year the charity provides much-needed emotional and practical support to around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital.

Although the accommodation is free of charge to families, the charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to run its houses. Big Chocolate Tea is The Sick Children's Trust's biggest annual fundraising event and the charity is calling for the nation to join in so it can continue to help thousands of families stay together with their sick child when it matters most. **Corporate Fundraising Officer, Rebecca Nielson, says:**

"Big Chocolate Tea is a great way to fundraise at the office – Emily and Luke have proven that it's a big favourite among their colleagues!

"We're delighted to hear that Esmé is getting on so well and are so grateful to her whole family for their continued support. We'd like to say a special thanks to Mercedes-Benz and Smart for supporting us this year and raising a fantastic £150 which will keep a family together for five nights.

"If you would like to find out more about Big Chocolate Tea and how you can get involved, please do get in touch."

While the campaign runs during the month of May, supporters can choose to take part in Big Chocolate Tea at any point during the year.

To find out how you can get involved with Big Chocolate Tea, please email

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