Family of little girl born with hole in heart thank charity for keeping them by her hospital bedside

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The family of a little girl who required major heart surgery at just a few days old have thanked The Sick Children's Trust for giving them free 'Home from Home' accommodation when she was admitted to a hospital miles away from home.

When one year old Amelia Foster was born she was diagnosed with an aortic narrowing and a large hole in her heart. At just a few days old she was transferred from the University of North Durham Hospital to Freeman Hospital, in Newcastle upon Tyne, for major heart surgery. **Dad, Paul Foster, who along with three friends ran last year's Great North Run to raise £2,000 for The Sick Children's Trust and Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF), says:**

"Amelia was born three and a half weeks early weighing just 3lb 11oz, which for a baby who is nearly full term is very small. Because of this, she was rushed straight to the neonatal unit within the University of North Durham Hospital. At this point we had no idea just how poorly Amelia was. At three days old the doctors couldn't find a pulse in her groin so they decided she needed to be transferred to Freeman Hospital for further investigation. A scan revealed she had an aortic narrowing and a large hole in her heart.

"A consultant sat down with us and drew a picture of a normal heart and Amelia's heart – the differences were immediately clear. We felt comfortable knowing what it was, but were still very anxious about what was going to happen next.

"Although we live just thirty minutes away from the hospital, the thought of being that far away from our baby – who was just a few days old and was about to undergo major surgery – was terrifying.

"Thankfully, we were told about a place called Scott House which is run by The Sick Children's Trust and was just a couple of minutes' walk away from the hospital ward. Scott House was fantastic. At a time when we were completely lost and didn't know what to do with ourselves, we were given a place where we could go to make a cuppa and have a lie down, but still remain close to our seriously ill baby."

Despite a quick recovery, Amelia was readmitted to Freeman Hospital over Christmas in 2016 for urgent heart surgery. Once again, parents Paul and Hannah, along with their eldest daughter Ellie, were supported at Scott House. **Paul continues:**

"Hospital life the second time round was a lot tougher. But with thanks to the amazing staff at Freeman Hospital and The Sick Children's Trust, it was much easier. We didn't have to leave Ellie with her grandparents and spend Christmas without her because we were once again supported by Scott House, where we could be together as a family and stay whilst Amelia was being treated in hospital. And it really did lift so much pressure off our shoulders.

"After eight days in hospital, we finally managed to bring our daughter home. And since, Amelia has continued to do really well. We even managed to spend last Christmas together which was absolutely fantastic.

"There may be more surgeries in the future for Amelia but nothing too invasive. We're so thrilled to see how far she's come. And we appreciate every single memory and moment we have with our girls."

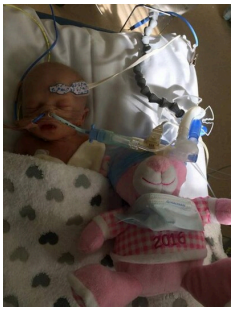
The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. Although accommodation is provided to families free of charge, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Scott House Manager, Andrew Leadbitter, says:**

"It's wonderful to hear that Amelia's recovery is going well, and we're so pleased that we could ease some of the worries and stresses that come with having a seriously ill child in hospital by supporting her family with free 'Home from Home' accommodation.

"We'd also like to say a huge thank you to Paul and his friends for taking on the Great North Run last year for us and raising such a fantastic amount of money. It costs us £30 to support a family for one night in a 'Home from Home', so because of their fundraising they have helped keep many more families together."

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