Family raise over £200 to thank charity for 'Home from Home'

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The family of a teenager who became seriously ill following an ear infection which led to an abscess on the brain have raised over £200 for The Sick Children's Trust.

Last year, when Joseph Turner was 14 years old, he became unwell with what was believed to be an ear infection. After a course of antibiotics, Joseph began to improve and returned to school. However, it wasn't long before he became ill again; he was vomiting, lost his appetite and was very weak. His parents, Carla and Stuart, made the decision to take him to A&E at Ipswich Hospital, where he was kept in overnight. The following morning, Joseph became unresponsive and was sent for a scan which showed he had a mass on his brain.

His parents were told his condition was very serious, and not long after he became unresponsive again and was put on life-support. Joseph needed urgent brain surgery at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, nearly 70 miles away from home. On arrival, he had two operations to relieve the pressure on his brain and to treat the infection in his ear. For two weeks, The Sick Children's Trust supported Joseph's parents at its 'Home from Home' Acorn House, which meant they could remain by his hospital bedside as he recovered. **Mum Carla says:**

"Arriving at Addenbrooke's and seeing Joseph in such a bad way was heart breaking. As we waited for him to come out of theatre, we were given the worst case scenarios, which were absolutely dreadful to listen to. We needed him to wake up and show us that he could pull through, but looking at him – lying there helpless – we could see he had a big battle ahead.

"Thinking about somewhere to stay was not our priority, but it is something that is vital when your child is fighting for his life nearly 70 miles away from home. Staying at Acorn House meant we could be there for Joseph the entire time and talk him through what had happened, reassuring him that he'd be fine and that we weren't going to leave his side.

"Simple things, like having the facilities to cook a meal and a place to lay your head are things you don't even think twice about back home. What was also very special about Acorn House was the fact that we had a telephone in our room. A week after we'd been there, Joseph needed yet another operation, so knowing we had that phone just in case they needed to ring was a huge weight off our shoulders. We were almost next door, so could be there in an instant."

A year on, Joseph is now doing really well. He is back at school full time and currently studying for his GCSEs. Joseph, along with his parents, brothers and sisters, raised £220 for Acorn House and The Sick Children's Trust to say thank you for keeping them together during this time. **Carla continues:**

"We'd never heard about The Sick Children's Trust before this, and it meant so much to us to be there with Joseph. Over Christmas we encouraged family members to donate money and items from the wish lists. Along with another family who stayed at Acorn House, we also had a Big Chocolate Tea party and raised £220! We just want to say thank you and to do our bit to help families who are in similar situations, as Acorn House made such a difference to our experience."

Acorn House Manager, Sandra, says: "Joseph is so inspirational. He visited us and donated lots of items for our resident families and we couldn't believe just how much he's come on since last year. Acorn House and the other nine 'Homes from Home' run by The Sick Children's Trust are incredibly important to families who find themselves in the most worrying situations a parent can imagine. Not only do our 'Homes from Home' give families a comfortable place stay, just minutes from their child's bedside, but they provide emotional support. Families can talk to other families in similar situations, and our house teams are always available to chat after a difficult day on the wards.

"We'd like to thank the Turner family for their donations. It costs The Sick Children's Trust £30 to support a family in one of our 'Homes from Home', and this is funded by voluntary donations, so we are delighted that this money will go towards helping more families in need."

To find out more about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit: www.sickchildrenstrust.org.

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