Family who nearly lost daughter to virus raise £500 for The Sick Children's Trust

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The family of a little girl who nearly died last year after contracting a serious virus have raised £500 for The Sick Children's Trust.

Chevonne and Lee Shears, from Morpeth, were given the devastating news that their daughter, Gabriella (three), might die when she contracted a rare type of the parainfluenza virus which caused croup and narrowed her windpipe to the size of a newborn's. The virus – known as the human parainfluenza virus type 2 (HPIV-2) – left Gabriella with a collapsed lung and reliant on a life-support machine. Gabriella's condition was so severe that she was rushed from the Northumbria Emergency Care Hospital in Cramlington to Newcastle's Royal Victory Infirmary (RVI) where her parents were told to prepare for the worst. **Mum Chevonne says:**

"Everything happened so fast. One minute we thought our daughter had a cold and the next she was struggling to stay alive. We were petrified. Within an hour of arriving at our local hospital we were transferred to Newcastle and that's when we knew that things were not looking good, at all. With her windpipe being so narrow, they tried to reduce the swelling but nothing would work. It was awful to see our daughter like this. And it was just so unexpected. All we could do was hold her hand and hope she would pull through."

Gabriella was kept on the life-support machine for three days before doctors attempted to take her off. Thankfully, she responded well and made incredible progress and four days later her parents could take her home.

While Gabriella underwent treatment in the RVI, her parents were never more than a few minutes from her hospital bedside as The Sick Children's Trust supported them with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Crawford House.

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country supporting families with seriously ill children in hospital. Chevonne and Lee were given their own private room with a direct telephone line to Gabriella's ward, alongside access to a communal living room, kitchen and dining area. **Chevonne adds:**

"We were desperate. We were being told our daughter may not live to see another day and we couldn't imagine not being there by her side to support her and encourage her to stay strong. Being offered a room at The Sick Children's Trust's Crawford House made a huge difference. It meant that we could leave her side, but feel comforted knowing that if anything did happen the doctors could call us on the direct telephone line in our room. We knew that if we did get a call, we could be by her bedside in an instant.

"We couldn't have managed without the support of The Sick Children's Trust which is why I decided to join in with the charity's Big Chocolate Tea campaign and hold an event at my work. I'm delighted to say we raised £500 with thanks to everyone's generosity."

Big Chocolate Tea is The Sick Children's Trust's biggest annual fundraising campaign. Participants are encouraged to hold a Big Chocolate Tea event at any point through the year. This may include holding a cake sale, tea party or bake-off to raise at least £30 to help the charity support families with seriously ill children in hospital with free 'Home from Home' accommodation. It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Crawford House Manager, Gail Stonley, says:**

"We'd like to say a huge thank you to Chevonne and her family for joining in with Big Chocolate Tea and raising £500. As a charity we support thousands of families with seriously ill children in hospital with free 'Home from Home' accommodation so that they can stay close to their sick child. And although the accommodation is provided to families' free-of-charge it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. So this money will make a huge difference in helping us to support many more families like Gabriella's."

For further information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/

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