Family's year long fundraising after son's rare tumour treatment

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A Yorkshire family are organising a year's worth of fundraising to thank The Sick Children's Trust, the charity that provided them with free place to stay while their son was in hospital.

Paul and Natasha Gibbs' lives were turned upside down after a lump discovered on their newborn son Ralph's neck was revealed to be a benign tumour of blood vessels. They were referred to Leeds Children's Hospital, allowed home and told to watch Ralph's breathing as the lump could impact on his airway. Less than 24 hours later the family were back in the hospital as the lump had grown considerably, changed colour and Ralph's breathing had become laboured. The tumour started to bleed into itself and due to its size, which grew to the size of an orange, doctors struggled to stop it. Ralph was sedated and intubated to secure his airway and diagnosed with a rare malformation of blood vessels with, only a few cases known globally.

During this traumatic ordeal the family were never more than a stone's throw away from the hospital as they were being supported by The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Eckersley House. **Paul, 38 Primary School Teacher, said:**

"With Ralph's condition constantly changing we never knew what to expect when we walked back onto the ward. It was like an endless nightmare.

"The doctors managed to stop the bleeding and stabilise Ralph, but while they tried their best to treat him he had another bleed, this time into his airway. We watched our baby stop breathing, go blue, and be rushed into surgery. We were told to take things hour by hour.

"Being able to stay at Eckersley House made everything so much easier and gave us one less thing to worry about in a very stressful situation. To have a safe, clean and comfortable place to rest, cook and enjoy a proper meal and shower made such an incredible difference. Having the phone connection straight to the ward was a massive physiological benefit and all of this helped us to come back stronger each day for Ralph."

To thank The Sick Children's Trust for its support, Paul and Natasha are now organising a host of fundraising events throughout the year alongside their friends and family. From birthday fundraisers to local schools already organising bake sales, there is plenty more on the way. **Paul added:**

"It was a huge support being so close to the ward and it's unbelievably comforting not to worry about how you can get to the hospital and we wanted to give that support to more families. There were several people that wanted to help fundraise, so we decided to spread the events out for a whole year."

While it is free for families to stay at one of The Sick Children's Trust's 'Homes from Home' it does cost the charity £30 a night to support a family. £30 gives a family so much more than just a roof over their heads when their child is in hospital. £30 gives them someone to talk to, and a calm place to rest with their family. **Eckersley House Manager, Jane McHale, said**:

"No parent with a seriously ill child in hospital should have to worry about how they can be by their bedside and thanks to the generosity of supporters like Paul and Natasha, The Sick Children's Trust will be able to keep more families together while their child is in hospital. We wish Paul and Natasha all the best with Ralphs's treatment and we can't thank them enough for their support."

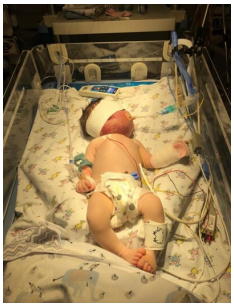
Ralph's treatment has been working well with the lump now considerably reduced in size and the family are hoping to have his tracheostomy reversed in the coming months.

More information about the family's fundraising and story can be found on their Just Giving page https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ralph-gibbs1

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