‘Give the Gift of Togetherness’ Doncaster couple’s message this Christmas

Wednesday 27 November, 2019

A couple whose daughter was born with a condition occurring in just 1% of babies are looking forward to celebrating their first family Christmas together at home this year.

Helen Stapleton and Brian Long, from Doncaster, were devastated to find out at their 20 week scan that there was an issue with their daughter’s kidneys. Edie, now five months old, was diagnosed with dilation in both kidneys (bilateral hydronephrosis), alongside double kidney systems on both sides, dilated ureters and renal damage. The couple spent 11 days with their daughter at Sheffield Children’s Hospital when she was born until she was well enough to go home. During this time The Sick Children’s Trust gave them a place to stay at its ‘Homes from Home’ Treetop and Magnolia Houses, just a few minutes’ walk from her hospital bedside.

While the couple get ready to christen Edie and put up the tree in time for Christmas, they are sharing their experience of having a sick child in hospital to remind others that this is the reality many families will be facing this festive season. Helen and Brian are asking others to Give the Gift of Togetherness to a family with a sick child in hospital by donating £30 to The Sick Children’s Trust which gives families with seriously ill children in hospital a place to stay in its ‘Homes from Home’ across the country. **Helen said:**

“As we look forward to celebrating our first Christmas with Edie, we’re thinking about the families who will be spending theirs with their baby in hospital. Though, with the support of The Sick Children’s Trust they will be able to wake up and be with their child on that special day.

“We didn’t really know what to expect after Edie arrived**.** We didn’t know how long we’d be in hospital and we were a long way from home. On the Neonatal Surgical Unit there is one comfy chair by every baby’s bedside and visitors are limited to two. Trying to figure out how it was all going to work was a nightmare. I was worrying about all these little things that really shouldn’t matter when your baby is in hospital. That is unless someone else swoops in to take care of it for you.

“Fortunately for us, someone did. The Sick Children’s Trust is the charity that gives families with a seriously ill child in hospital a place to stay close to their bedside. You don’t ever think you’ll be the one needing to use a charity. We’d never heard of The Sick Children’s Trust before Edie was born, yet it is so obvious why the charity exists. Without it, a terrible time would’ve been unbearable.”

The Sick Children’s Trust runs two ‘Homes from Home’ in Sheffield, supporting families with children undergoing treatment on the wards and intensive care units. Helen and Brian were able to be with Edie throughout her entire hospital treatment because the charity gave them a place to stay. **Helen continued:**

“I’d encourage anyone who can donate to The Sick Children’s Trust to do so. When we were told about the support the charity could give us, we thought it was almost too good to be true. There were so many poorly babies that I was worried we’d have to leave. Not once did we have to and it was one less thing to worry about. Because of The Sick Children’s Trust we were able to experience all the things you should be able to experience with your newborn.”

The Sick Children’s Trust is the charity that gives over 3,500 families with a seriously ill child in hospital a warm and comfortable place to stay when they need it most. It costs The Sick Children’s Trust £30 to support a family for one night in a ‘Home from Home’. **Chief Executive Jane Featherstone said:**

“Sadly, not every child will be snugged up in bed at home on Christmas Eve, excitedly waiting for Father Christmas to deliver their presents. Hundreds of children across the country will be in hospital, and every one of them should be with their family at Christmas. Our ‘Homes from Home’ mean that families won’t have to worry about where they’ll stay. They can spend Christmas together.

“We are urging everyone to Give the Gift of Togetherness this Christmas by donating £30. £30 gives a family so much more than just a roof over their heads, it gives them someone to talk to and a calm place to rest. Most importantly, it will mean they can spend Christmas together.”

To give a family the Gift of Togetherness by donating £30, visit: sickchildrenstrust.org/christmas

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