Grateful Grandma walks miles for charity to celebrate baby granddaughter beating cancer

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A local grandma has raised over £800 to thank The Sick Children's Trust for supporting her family while her granddaughter received lifesaving cancer treatment in a hospital miles away from home.

Donna Waters, from Norwich, recently organised a sponsored walk to raise vital funds for The Sick Children's Trust. The charity supported her family with free 'Home from Home' accommodation earlier this year when her granddaughter, Isla, needed specialist treatment at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge.

In February, Isla's parents, Matthew and Chloe, noticed she'd developed a rash all over her body. Concerned that it was meningitis they took her to their local hospital, Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, for blood tests. Tragically, the results revealed that the ten month old had an aggressive form of cancer, acute myeloid leukaemia, which required immediate chemotherapy. It was at this point that Isla's parents were supported at The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Acorn House which meant they were only ever a few moments from her side. Grandmother Donna says:

"I'll never forget the day my son rang me from hospital and said 'Mum, its leukaemia'. I couldn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it. My husband and I rushed to go see them and when we arrived medical staff were already arranging an ambulance to transfer Isla to Addenbrooke's Hospital. I knew there was nothing I could say or do that would make the situation better, I just needed to be there so I could support Matthew, Chloe and their six year old son, Zak.

"Isla needed four courses of chemotherapy lasting over six months and thankfully The Sick Children's Trust was there to support my family throughout it all. The 'Home from Home' made it possible for Matthew and Chloe to take time away from the wards to be with Zak at Acorn House, to eat a family meal or simply sit down and play a board game together. I'm so thankful that they had that safe haven to go back to every night.

"When we were given the all clear from Isla's consultant and told that she could go home it was the most amazing moment. Seeing Isla with her parents ringing the bell to celebrate the end of treatment was incredible, and a moment we'd feared might never come."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, giving families with seriously ill children free accommodation just minutes from their child's hospital bedside. It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. Donna, who raised £892 for The Sick Children's Trust, continues:

"My family had discussed giving something back to the charity because it had been our lifeline through some of our darkest moments. So when my colleagues at Cotman Housing Association suggested that we raise money by doing a sponsored walk, I leapt at the chance. It was a three mile walk through Whitlingham Country Park and I'm delighted that we exceeded our target of £500! The part that made it really special was seeing Matthew, Chloe and Isla waiting for us at the finish line. It was a real celebration of how far we've come as a family."

Every year The Sick Children's Trust provides much-needed emotional and practical support to around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital. Although the accommodation is free of charge to families, the charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to run its houses. Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:

"We were thrilled when Isla successfully completed her treatment and was able to go back home with her family. She's such a little fighter!

"We can't thank Donna and her colleagues enough for holding such a great event which has raised so much money for The Sick Children's Trust. Because of their support, we will be able to make such a difference to many more families who need a 'Home from Home' when their child is seriously ill in hospital."

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

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