Grateful mum organises pyjama party at son's nursery to thank charity that supported her family

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The mum of a little boy who required lifesaving treatment at a hospital over 30 miles away from home, is organising a Pyjama Party to say thank you to The Sick Children's Trust for supporting her family.

One year old Charlie and Mum Christina Mitcham, from Sudbury, are organising a Pyjama Party at Anglia Sunshine Nursery to thank The Sick Children's Trust for keeping their family together at the most difficult time imaginable.

Charlie was born at 29 weeks weighing just 2lbs 12oz at Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford. After three days Mum Christina and Dad James went home, whilst Charlie was still being monitored at the hospital. Despite his little body coping well at first, parents Christina and James received an urgent telephone call in the early hours to tell them that their five day old son had sepsis. This was causing his blood pressure to drop, which meant his body wasn't getting enough oxygen and resulted in severe kidney failure. Charlie was rushed to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge for lifesaving treatment. He remained there for 63 days. During this time Christina and James were supported at The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Chestnut House. **Mum Christina, 27, says:**

"When we arrived at The Rosie Hospital we were told the next 24 hours were critical. He wasn't expected to make it through his treatment. I didn't know what to do with myself and we were completely terrified about what was to come.

"Thankfully we were offered a room at Chestnut House where we were allowed to stay until Charlie got better. We ended up staying for a total of nine weeks and it really did become a 'Home from Home'. It was a lifeline in such a horrendous situation.

"Abi, the Chestnut House Manager, was fantastic – she was always there to listen and offer kind words of support. At Chestnut House we were just 44 steps away from our little boy because the accommodation is on the floor below the neonatal intensive care unit – and that was so reassuring. The phone in our room meant the ward could call us at any time day or night if we weren't with Charlie, and if there was a problem we could be by Charlie's bedside in minutes."

After a tough nine weeks, Charlie was transferred to their local hospital. When Charlie was two and a half months old, Christina and James were eventually able to take their son home and enjoy life together as a family. But in August this year, just after Charlie's first birthday, they noticed he started to turn blue and had to return to Addenbrooke's Hospital where they discovered his tongue was growing quicker than his jaw, and as a result it was blocking his airways. Once again, the couple didn't have to leave their son's hospital bedside as they were supported by The Sick Children's Trust, but this time at Acorn House. **Christina, who worked at Anglia Sunshine Nursery for six years, adds:**

"We had hoped we wouldn't need to use The Sick Children's Trust's 'Homes from Home' again but unfortunately we found ourselves back in Cambridge. Acorn House offered us a safe retreat away from the wards and it was so reassuring to know we had somewhere comfortable and private to go if it all got a bit too much – somewhere to make a cuppa or sleep.

"And that's why I have encouraged Anglia Sunshine Nursery to host a Pyjama Party to say thank you to The Sick Children's Trust for supporting my family when it felt like our world was falling apart. I hadn't heard of the charity before I needed them and I think they do an incredible job to support families with children being treated in hospital. Hopefully the money raised will help support more families in the charity's 'Homes from Home'."

The Sick Children's Trust's Pyjama Party runs from Monday 16 October to Friday 20 October and encourages children to be sponsored to wear their pyjamas for the day and take part in various creative, active and educational activities. The charity runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting around 4,000 families every year and relies on donations to keep its houses open. **Vicki Roots, Community Fundraising Officer at The Sick Children's Trust, says:**

"We'd like to say a huge thank you to Christina and everyone at Anglia Sunshine Nursery for organising

a Pyjama Party for us. We rely entirely on voluntary donations to keep our ‘Homes from Home’ running so your fundraising will keep families together when their child is seriously ill in hospital. We hope your party is a huge success and we look forward to hearing all about it.”

If you’d like to take part in Pyjama Party, please email pyjamaparty@sickchildrenstrust.org or call 020 7283 4066 to request your free fundraising pack.

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