Hornchurch couple thank charity for keeping them together by baby son's hospital bedside with London to Brighton bike ride

Wednesday 10 March, 2021

A Hornchurch couple whose son contracted bacterial meningitis at just two weeks old are gearing up to raise over £1,000 for The Sick Children's Trust, the charity which gave them a place to stay just minutes from their son's hospital bedside.

Mary and Joe Clark realised something wasn't right when their 13 day old baby, Alfie, suddenly became unsettled. After a call to 111, Alfie was rushed to A&E at Queen's Hospital where doctors noticed he was having seizures and had a temperature. The following day he was put into an induced coma and urgently transferred to the Royal London Hospital in East London.

The couple were told that Alfie was in a critical condition and the next 48 hours were crucial. As he received lifesaving treatment, Mary and Joe were told about The Sick Children's Trust and its 'Home from Home' Stevenson House. Stevenson House is located just a few minutes' walk from the children's wards at the Royal London and gives parents, like Mary and Joe, a place to stay close to their seriously ill child's hospital bedside. Within days, Alfie was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis but thankfully his parents were with him every step of his treatment and recovery because of The Sick Children's Trust. To thank the charity for its support, Joe will be taking on the iconic 55 mile London to Brighton cycling challenge in September while Mary focuses on raising funds for The Sick Children's Trust. **29 year old Mary said:**

"Whilst the doctors and nurses were settling Alfie in, monitoring him and helping him to breathe, we were taken to Stevenson House where we were told we could stay while he was in hospital. It's hard to explain exactly how much The Sick Children's Trust helped us in such a difficult time. We were unsure of what we were walking into and couldn't believe the whole set up and how homely it felt. Stevenson House allowed us to feel close to Alfie even when we weren't able to be. It also provided our parents with a lot of comfort to know we were being looked after and were safe.

"Without Stevenson House we faced an hour's journey on public transport each way which would've added a lot more stress to an already very stressful situation. Having the opportunity to stay at Stevenson House really helped us and it also gave us peace of mind. We cannot speak highly enough of The Sick Children's Trust and hope that by us raising this money it shows how much we really appreciate everything it does for families during these difficult times."

Alfie turned one year old in February and is a cheeky little boy who keeps his parents on their toes. 29 year old dad Joe, a self-confessed exercise novice, is currently piecing his bike together before starting his training for the cycling event**. He added:**

"I'm really looking forward to taking part in the challenge and I'm amazed at all the donations and support we've received so far. I may not be an exercise expert but I am determined to complete this challenge. My motivation will be Alfie and thinking about seeing him at the finish line, I want to make him proud by completing this challenge."

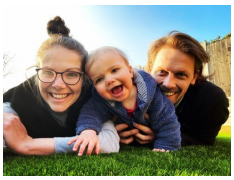
The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, giving families with a seriously ill child in hospital a place to stay, and a friendly ear to listen. It costs £30 to support a family for one night in a 'Home from Home' and the charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to do this. **Charlotte Coldrey, Community Fundraising Officer at The Sick Children's Trust, said:**

"I can see just how much having a place to stay meant to Mary and Joe and I am so pleased that we could do that for them. As a charity we are incredibly grateful to Mary and Joe for choosing to fundraise for us, and it will be a tough challenge to complete!

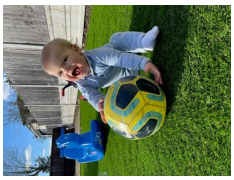
"We're all wishing Joe the very best of luck and can't wait to hear how it goes."

To support Mary and Joe's fundraising efforts, visit: https://justgiving.com/fundraising/joelpclark

Media:







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