Hull twins feature in charity film as thanks for keeping them together

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With the turn of a new decade, charity The Sick Children's Trust is committing to ensure families with a seriously ill child in hospital across the country have a warm and comfortable place to stay when they need it most, like Noah and Riley Watkins – inseparable twins from Hull who were kept together thanks to the charity despite one requiring brain surgery far away from home.

Around 2.1 million children are admitted to hospital every year. Often, they find themselves in a city far away from home in order to receive the care they need. The Sick Children's Trust is the charity that gives families with a seriously ill child in hospital a comfortable place to stay and a friendly ear to listen in one of its ten 'Homes from Home'.

Over the last ten years, the charity has kept over 33,000 families together. One of these is the Watkins family, from Hull, who found themselves at Leeds Children's Hospital when their son, Riley, needed major brain surgery in 2018. Riley has moyamoya disease which is believed to affect just one in a million people in the UK. Moyamoya blocks the two main blood vessels that supply blood to the brain and it compensates for the lack of blood supply by developing a network of blood vessels. Coupled with this he also has another rare condition called Hypothalamic Hamartoma – a tumour – which affects just one in 200,000 children. During his time in hospital, his parents Wendy and Chris along with his identical twin, Noah, were given a place to stay at Eckersley House run by The Sick Children's Trust. **Chris said:**

"It was an extremely stressful situation before Eckersley House. We were told Riley needed urgent surgery, his condition was described as a ticking time bomb. One of our main concerns was how I'd be able to be with Riley and Wendy, I could be anywhere from an hour to two hours away.

"On the day Riley went for his surgery, we received a call from The Sick Children's Trust to say they had a room for us, and Noah could stay too. They call Eckersley House a 'Home from Home' and that's what it is. I don't know what we would've done without it. It was a godsend."

Since leaving the hospital, the family have supported the charity – attending its events, fundraisers and raising awareness – most recently featuring in the charity's impact film released this month. The film highlights the difference having a place to stay near your sick child can have on the family's wellbeing. **Wendy added:**

"It just took all the worry away. We could be together. Having Noah there was a massive benefit to both the boys. They are the best of friends and are inseparable. Noah was the medicine Riley needed to pick him up."

On average, it takes a family 97 minutes to travel from home to be by their sick children's hospital bedside. 99% of families who have been given a place to stay by The Sick Children's Trust believe having a 'Home from Home' has helped them cope and improved their child's recovery. **Jane Featherstone, Chief Executive of The Sick Children's Trust, said:**

"We believe it is so important that the whole family can stay together. When Riley was in hospital, having his brother by his side, laughing, playing together while he recovered made all the difference.

"There is such a high demand for families who need to be close to their child, with over two million children being admitted to hospital every year in critical conditions. That's why in the last ten years we have made it our priority to open three more 'Homes from Home' to keep more families together.

"Over the next decade, The Sick Children's Trust will continue to be there for families who find themselves with a seriously ill child in hospital, giving them a place to stay and one less thing to worry about."

To watch The Sick Children's Trust's film featuring the Watkins family: http://bit.ly/sctwatkins

To donate to The Sick Children's Trust, visit sickchildrenstrust.org

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