Jasmine thanks charity for keeping her parents by her side 20 years on from lifesaving treatment

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A local student has raised £430 for The Sick Children's Trust to thank the charity for the support it gave her family two decades ago.

20 years ago, Jasmine Casey, from South Shields, was born prematurely with a birth defect called gastroschisis, whereby her intestines were on the outside of her body. At less than an hour old, she had surgery and for the following six months underwent specialist treatment in Newcastle. During this time, her parents Nicola and Robert, were given free 'Home from Home' accommodation by The Sick Children's Trust at its Crawford House, located within the hospital grounds. This accommodation meant that Jasmine always had her parents by her hospital bedside, throughout her 11 operations.

Since finding out more about the vital work carried out by The Sick Children's Trust, Jasmine has been passionately fundraising and raising awareness for the charity. The University of Sunderland Sociology student, who is currently studying abroad in Australia, recently took on the Melbourne Half Marathon to kick off her fundraising. **She said:**

"Being so critically ill at just hours old was incredibly scary for my parents. Some may think it's just a short distance to Newcastle from South Shields, but when you're told your child might not survive travelling it's not an option. It's too risky.

"My health shifted between critically ill and stable, and when it was touch and go my parents stayed at Crawford House. On the days when I seemed better, they offered their room back to the charity and made the journey home. But either way Crawford House was always there for them, welcoming them back with open arms."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting around 4,000 families every year with seriously ill children in hospital. **Jasmine continued:**

"The Sick Children's Trust is an amazing charity that has helped so many families who have sick children in hospital and I truly believe that if it wasn't for the charity I wouldn't be who I am today. I believe that the most important thing for a child in hospital is to have their parents and loved ones close by. This wouldn't have been possible for my family, and thousands of others, if it wasn't for The Sick Children's Trust.

"Since finding out about The Sick Children's Trust's work across the UK, I've been doing all I can for the charity – even though I'm currently studying abroad in Australia. Last year I successfully completed my first half marathon, on the other side of the world and managed to raise enough money to sponsor the very room that my parents stayed in when I was born. When I went home for Christmas break I got to see first-hand the incredible work carried out at Crawford House. It was the first time I'd been there in 20 years. Handing over the cheque to the House Manager was the most rewarding experience. It felt amazing to be able to give back to the charity to say thank you for everything.

"The Sick Children's Trust helped my family in so many ways, it was so much more than just a place to stay. It is because of this that I will continue to raise money and awareness for this charity, so that other families receive the same support that we did."

It costs The Sick Children's Trust £30 to support a family for one night in 'Home from Home' accommodation and the charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to do this. **Regional Fundraising Officer, Emily Corney, said:**

"It's been a pleasure getting to know Jasmine over the last year – she's really gone above and beyond in helping to raise awareness and money for The Sick Children's Trust.

"The money Jasmine has raised so far has gone directly towards giving another family a 'Home from Home', keeping them close to their seriously ill child. For that, we'd like to say a huge thank you."

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

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