Local dad runs London Marathon and raises £1,100 for The Sick Children's Trust

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A grateful father whose daughter required lifesaving surgery when she was just ten months old took on the iconic Virgin Money London Marathon on 22 April to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust – a charity which supports families with seriously ill children in hospital with free 'Home from Home' accommodation.

Tom Fowler, 46, from Brightlingsea, completed the 26.2 mile course in just 3 hours 29 minutes to thank the charity for giving him and his wife, Gemma, free 'Home from Home' accommodation in 2010 when their daughter, Violet, needed emergency treatment miles away from home.

At just ten months old, Violet became seriously ill with mastoiditis, an infection of the skull's mastoid bone, located just behind the ear. The affected ear became raised and pushed forward, with visible and tender swelling. Violet was admitted to Colchester General Hospital and immediately given antibiotics in an attempt to overcome the infection. However, over the next two days, rather than improve, her condition deteriorated with the swelling causing pressure to build on her brain. The decision was made to transfer her to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge for lifesaving treatment. She underwent a complicated operation to drain the middle ear and relieve the pressure that the fluid was exerting on her brain. Whilst she recovered on the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) at Addenbrooke's Hospital Tom and Gemma, along with Violet's older sister, Molly, were supported by The Sick Children's Trust at Acorn House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation located just moments from where Violet was recuperating. **Dad, Tom, who is a Deputy Manager of Residential and Extended Provision at Langham Oaks School, says:**

"The ten days we spent at Addenbrooke's Hospital were the scariest of our lives and having a room at Acorn House took away at least one stress that we were experiencing. It gave us both a place to catch up on sleep between taking it in turns to stay with our daughter. The house had a stock of basic food and toiletries and it also gave us a chance to speak to other parents in a similar, or often much worse, position. It was a little haven during a terrible time and words can't describe what a comfort Acorn House was.

"I wanted to run a marathon for The Sick Children's Trust to thank them for their support and give back a little bit of what they gave my family during our time of need. I have run marathons before, but this was the toughest yet because it was the hottest London Marathon on record and the opposite conditions to those I had trained in!

"Knowing what I was running for kept me going. It was amazing to be cheered on by Gemma and Violet at miles 12 and 21 – they really inspired me to keep running and complete the race, as did all my friends and family who've made such generous donations to The Sick Children's Trust leading up to the race."

As part of #TeamSCT this year, Tom was joined by 18 other runners who combined have so far raised £25,873 with donations still coming in. 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. The charity relies entirely on voluntary donations and it costs £30 to support a family for one night. This year's marathon runners have raised enough to support a family for 862 nights with 'Home from Home' accommodation. **Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

"Tom completed the London Marathon so quickly – we were all so impressed by his time and grateful to him for raising money for The Sick Children's Trust years after we supported his family. It really is an indication of the long term impact the charity has on a family.

"His donation, along with the money raised by our other runners, will make a huge difference going forwards and help us to support more families, like his, who find themselves at a hospital, miles from home."

To add to Tom's fundraising total, please visit:

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