Local dad to run London Marathon to raise money 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 will be running the Virgin Money London Marathon 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, will be taking on his fifth and final marathon this April to thank The Sick Children's Trust 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. **Dad, Tom, who is a Deputy Manager of Residential and Extended Provision at Langham Oaks School, says:**

"We were terrified when the doctors told us that Violet's condition had become life-threatening and that she needed to be sent to Addenbrooke's Hospital for specialist treatment. My wife, Gemma, went in the ambulance with Violet and I followed behind in the car, not knowing what would happen when we arrived.

"Once my daughter was admitted onto the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) Gemma and I suddenly thought about the logistics of being in Cambridge with only one of us being able to stay in the hospital. Commuting 90 minutes to and from Brightlingsesa was not an option as Violet was critically ill. We needed to be together, but financially we were not in a position to stay in a hotel. It was at this point that The Sick Children's Trust stepped in. The charity gave us a room in its Acorn House, just a few moments from where Violet was being treated on PICU, totally free of charge."

The following day Violet underwent a lifesaving operation to drain the middle ear and relieve the pressure that the fluid was exerting on her brain. Whilst she recovered on PICU, Tom and Gemma, alongside Violet's older sister Molly, were supported at The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Acorn House for ten days. **Tom continues:**

"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.

"Luckily after the operation our daughter's condition improved and we were able to go home a week later, but I have never forgotten the difference The Sick Children's Trust made to us at that time. I have always promised that one day I would do something to raise money for this wonderful charity and running the London Marathon is just that.

"Knowing that I am running for a charity that does such wonderful work and gave us support when our daughter was so poorly will spur me on when the run gets tough. I would really appreciate any donation, no matter how small, to support The Sick Children's Trust."

Tom will join 16 other runners as part of #TeamSCT to raise vital funds for The Sick Children's Trust's ten 'Homes from Home' across the country. Although accommodation is provided to families free of charge, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

"We're delighted to welcome Tom on to #TeamSCT and we are really happy he has chosen to run his fifth and final marathon for The Sick Children's Trust.

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“It means so much to us when parents contact us years after being supported in one of our ‘Homes from Home’ to tell us that they are taking on a challenge to raise money and help other families.

“It’s wonderful to hear that Violet is a lively, inquisitive and very cheeky eight year old, who even joins her Dad every Saturday at the local parkrun! We will be there along with Violet on marathon day to cheer Tom on, and we wish him the very best of luck.”

To help Tom reach his £500 target, please visit:

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

Company Contact: