Local Mum Asks Community To Support Families With Sick Children

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A Stoke Poges mum whose baby was born life-threateningly ill is asking the community to support The Sick Children's Trust which kept her by her daughter's side.

Katie Kennedy, 36, wants to thank The Sick Children's Trust for giving her free 'Home from Home' accommodation when her daughter, Rosie, was born seriously ill. Rosie, now 23 months, was born six weeks early at Watford General Hospital, and within hours was rushed miles away to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge to receive lifesaving treatment. Rosie was born without a bottom and her insides weren't connecting meaning she couldn't feed. Before she was even a day old, the brave youngster underwent a life-saving operation to create a stoma bag so that she could eat and as a result spent the first week of her life on the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Rosie also had a hole in her heart which fortunately didn't need to be operated on.

During this time, Katie was able to stay by her baby's hospital bedside as she was given free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. **Katie, who also supported the charity by sharing her story at its London carol service which raised over £18,000, says:**

"Not long after Rosie was born, I was told that she needed emergency surgery miles away from home. Alarm bells started ringing in my head – how would she survive? She was so tiny and too fragile. All I wanted was to take my baby home, but instead we were separated.

"As a parent, there's an innate force within you, propelling you forward that says you must be there for your child and you must protect them. I felt I was failing as mother - it was only her first day in the world. By the time I arrived at The Rosie Hospital it had been nine hours since I'd seen my baby – I refused to be separated from her again. Fortunately, I didn't have to be as I was given a room in a place called Chestnut House, free accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust – just minutes from Rosie. I cried with relief.

"The Sick Children's Trust kept me by my daughter's side for the week she was on NICU in The Rosie Hospital and has since supported us again. Thanks to The Sick Children's Trust, my tiny baby's hand was held longer, she was cuddled more, read books and given words of encouragement round the clock. She was never alone. All of which helped my daughter have a better and faster recovery, because we were there for her."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten free 'Homes from Home' across the country supporting over 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital. Although the accommodation is provided free to families, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Katie adds:**

"The Sick Children's Trust made me stronger so I could be stronger for my baby. I dream that every hospital in the UK will have an office with a sign above the door that says The Sick Children's Trust and that no family will ever have to face their child being in hospital alone. But sadly, all over the UK there are families who are booking hotels, somehow finding money for things they did not plan for, and travelling to and from hospital every day for weeks and spending unnecessary time away from their very poorly child.

"So, I am asking everyone to think about making a donation and help a sick child have their mummy or daddy by their hospital bedside. What The Sick Children's Trust provides is not just a bed or somewhere to stay, it is the support when you need it most, and it is the recovery of a young person who has their whole future ahead of them. The Sick Children's Trust helps babies and children recover faster. It helps families suffering with trauma; it alleviates parents' physical and mental anxiety, practical worries and concerns."

Chestnut House opened in 2012 and has eight en-suite bedrooms, and gives families access to a shared kitchen, living area and laundry facilities. **Chestnut House Manager Abigail Abdel-aal says:**

"Katie's support means so much to us and to so many families with seriously ill children in hospitals across the country. When a child is ill, it is vital that they have their parents by their hospital bedside and it costs The Sick Children's Trust £30 to make that possible for one night."

For more information about The Sick Children's Trust, please visit www.sickchildrenstrust.org.

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