Local Soldier Takes On Marathon To Thank Charity For Support

Tuesday 7 March, 2017

Soldier Michael Tait is taking on the Virgin Money London Marathon next month to raise £2,000 for The Sick Children's Trust.

Michael, 31 from Chelmsford, is running the iconic route to say thank you to the charity for supporting him and wife Lisa with free 'Home from Home' accommodation when their son was born with serious medical issues.

Little Oliver, now one year old, was born at the couple's local hospital, Broomfield, but within hours was rushed to The Royal London Hospital after being diagnosed with tracheo-oesophageal fistula (TOF). The condition meant that Oliver had an abnormal connection running between his windpipe and oesophagus which left a gap, meaning his food would go straight into his lungs.

At just 12 hours old, Oliver underwent major lifesaving surgery and spent two weeks on the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) recovering. During this time, The Sick Children's Trust gave Michael and Lisa free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Stevenson House, just minutes from Oliver's bedside. **First time Dad Michael, says:**

"It was a complete shock when we found out how poorly Oliver was. You never think that your baby is going to have to fight so hard to survive before they're even an hour old. We were filled with absolute dread and fear because we didn't know what would happen.

"When we arrived at The Royal London Hospital, Oliver went straight into theatre. He was barely 12 hours old. It hurt so much to kiss him goodbye and watch him be taken away. But thankfully, four hours later we were finally given the news that the procedure had gone well. The agonising wait was over, but home was still a long way off.

"Following his operation, we were introduced to Alan from The Sick Children's Trust, who manages Stevenson House: free accommodation just minutes from the hospital. Stevenson House took a lot of the stress and worry of having a seriously ill baby in hospital away. For us, not having to worry about making our way to and from Chelmsford made a huge difference. Although Chelmsford doesn't seem too far – when your baby is just hours old and fighting for their life, anything more than five minutes is too much.

"Because of The Sick Children's Trust, we could be by Oliver's side at any time, pick him up and cuddle him when he was strong enough, and be there the moment he woke up. For that, I will forever feel indebted to the charity."

Oliver was discharged back to his local hospital after two weeks and then was finally allowed to go home. Although Oliver is doing well, he may have to undergo further surgery later this year and will have to attend yearly check-ups until he is 16. **Michael continues:**

"Oliver has come on leaps and bounds since he was born. He's a very happy child and is so loving. We have since been back to Stevenson House to visit Alan and Assistant House Manager Irma to thank them for their wonderful support. Stevenson House will always be a big part of our lives."

Stevenson House is one of ten 'Homes from Home' run by The Sick Children's Trust across the country, supporting thousands of families with seriously ill children in hospital. The charity completely relies on voluntary donations to keep the houses running. **Stevenson House Manager, Alan Booth, says:**

"We're delighted to hear that Michael is running the Virgin Money London Marathon to raise money for us, and we're so pleased that Oliver is doing well.

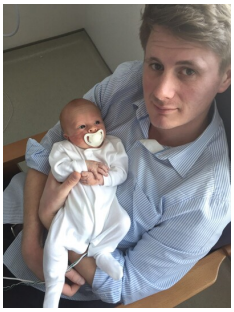
"It costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night in a 'Home from Home', so the money Michael raises will make a huge difference to families with seriously ill children in hospital."

To help Michael reach his target, please visit: http://buff.ly/2moLv8u

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

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