Mother raises money for charity who supported her during darkest hours

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Media:













A mother from Waltham Cross whose baby boy required lifesaving treatment when he was just hours old has thanked The Sick Children's Trust for giving her family free 'Home from Home' accommodation and keeping them together.

Katie Giles, 33, and her partner, Aaron Darville, 22, were terrified when their newborn baby, Leo, suffered a pneumothorax at birth and was rushed up to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow. A build-up of air in the space just outside one of his lungs had caused it to collapse, tearing a hole and meaning it could not inflate. Initially told by the paediatrician the tear would heal by itself over the days that followed, parents Katie and Aaron watched on helplessly as Leo's oxygen levels continued to plummet. Leo had to undergo a chest drain because there was so much air built up around his lungs. It was at this point that the newborn was put into an induced coma and ventilated to help him breathe. The next morning, and under a day old, he was transferred by emergency to The Rosie Hospital in Cambridge for further specialist treatment. On arrival, and with Leo settled on NICU, the couple were told about Chestnut House run by The Sick Children's Trust and offered a room there, totally free of charge. Mum, Katie, who suffered from gestational diabetes and was induced for five days before Leo was born, says:

"A nurse directed us to Chestnut House, just below NICU, two minutes from where Leo was being treated. Abi, the House Manager, met us at the door and showed us around. Even in my current state I could appreciate the impact being able to stay in the house had on families, especially when Abi said there was room for my oldest son, Jenson, too. I hadn't seen him in over five days and he was missing his Mum desperately. Aaron went to collect him and from then on we had the use of a private room with two single beds, a cot for Jenson and an en suite bathroom."

Over the next five days Leo's pneumothorax began to heal, but he received three blood transfusions during this time and, at one point, when his infection levels came back sky high, doctors were worried he had contracted meningitis. Fortunately, a few days later Leo was taken off the ventilator and began to breathe by himself again. Mum continues:

"I can't tell you the relief Aaron and I felt when we heard Leo cry properly for the first time. He was still on high flow oxygen, but at least he was breathing. From then on he just got better and better and it wasn't long before we were transferred back to Harlow and actually made it home when he was 12 days old.

"However, during our stay in Cambridge the support of the house team was invaluable. Abi and the staff were lovely – nothing was too much trouble and they knew exactly what to say to us. Also, practically, for me, there were breast pumps in Chestnut House, which meant I was able to express in the privacy of our room. In the middle of the night, when I couldn't sleep, I was able to walk my milk up to Leo on the ward and sit with him so he knew he wasn't alone."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' across the country, supporting around 4,000 families every year when they have a seriously ill children in hospital. Although The Sick Children's Trust provides accommodation to families free of charge, it costs the charity £30 to support a family for one night. Chestnut and Acorn House Manager Abi Abdel-aal says:

"It was such a relief for Katie and Aaron when I could offer them a family room at Chestnut House and they realised Jenson was welcome too. Keeping families together during a traumatic time is at the heart of what we do and I could see how much it meant to them.

"And it is lovely that Katie has gone on to raise £210 for us over her birthday. As a charity we rely entirely on voluntary donations and her efforts will support a family in a 'Home from Home' for a whole week. We can't thank her enough."

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

Notes to Editors:

About The Sick Children's Trust

The Sick Children's Trust is working to a future where every family with a seriously ill child in hospital will be able to stay together, just minutes from their child's bed during their treatment.

We believe keeping families together significantly improves the recovery of seriously ill children. We provide free, high-quality 'Home from Home' accommodation, as well as emotional and practical support, to families with sick children in hospital in the UK.

The Sick Children’s Trust was founded in 1982 by two paediatric specialists Dr Jon Pritchard and Professor James Malpas. Today we have ten ‘Homes from Home’ at major hospitals around the country where families can stay free of charge.

We support 4,000 families every year, and there is a growing demand for our ‘Homes from Home’ as children must increasingly travel long distances to get the specialist treatment they need.
www.sickchildrenstrust.org





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