Naval Petty Officer and colleagues fundraise on board HMS Westminster to thank charity

Monday 7 January, 2019

A Royal Navy officer has raised £935 for The Sick Children's Trust, a charity that provided his family with free 'Home from Home' accommodation in December 2016 when his baby required lifesaving treatment in hospital, an hour away from home.

Petty Officer Ryan 'Nobby' Halls, 32, organised a fundraiser aboard HMS Westminster, the Type 23 frigate of the Royal Navy, last year to thank The Sick Children's Trust for supporting his family when his daughter, Sadie, was diagnosed with bronchiolitis and rushed to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, miles from the family's home in Thetford.

Born a month premature at West Suffolk Hospital in Bury Saint Edmunds, Ryan and his wife, Tiffany, were elated when Sadie was discharged at two weeks old. The couple took their daughter home to meet her older sister, Sienna. However within a few weeks Sadie began to suffer with breathing difficulties and was rushed back to hospital. Deteriorating fast and struggling for survival on the intensive care unit, doctors made the decision to emergency transfer Sadie to a specialist paediatric hospital, Addenbrooke's, in Cambridge. Once there she was treated on the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) for bronchiolitis, which occurs when the smallest airways of the lungs get infected and fill with mucus, blocking the flow of air and making it hard to breathe. It was on PICU that the couple heard about The Sick Children's Trust and were offered a room at Acorn House, one of the charity's ten 'Homes from Home' across the country. **Dad, Ryan, who was presented with a Sea Guardian award in October 2017 and recently received a promotion to Chief Petty Officer says:**

"Finding out Sadie needed to be transferred to Cambridge just two days before Christmas was really tough. At a time when we were meant to be celebrating our newest arrival we found ourselves miles from home and unsure about what the future held. When we found out about The Sick Children's Trust, and that they had a room in Acorn House where we could stay totally free of charge, we were so relieved. It didn't just take away the financial worry of how we were going to pay for a hotel over a peak period when prices were sky high, but also meant we were right there, never more than a couple of minutes away from our seriously ill baby on PICU.

"We stayed in Acorn House for eight days whilst Sadie was undergoing treatment at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Fortunately she began to improve quite quickly and it wasn't long before we were reassured that she would make a full recovery.

"The nurses on the ward were amazing and it was them who told us about The Sick Children's Trust! In Acorn House, because it was Christmas, we kept finding presents on our bed donated by families who had previously been supported by the charity. It was such a lovely touch, especially as Tiffany and I had no time to go shopping so it meant that Sienna had something to open when our family brought her to visit. She also enjoyed playing in the playroom with us. Then there was the communal kitchen area; there were so many snacks left out for us. None of us went hungry that week!"

Ryan and his family wanted to thank The Sick Children's Trust for being there for them in their time of need. It was because of this that he organised a series of fundraising events aboard HMS Westminster, including a 'pizza night' whereby Ryan and his several colleagues organised a pizza delivery service, offering to hand deliver pizzas at £5 each directly to sailors' cabins. **Ryan adds:**

"We are so grateful to the team at Acorn House for giving us so much support whilst Sadie was in hospital. Not only were the house staff accommodating and helpful, but we spoke to other families who had a child in Addenbrooke's Hospital over the Christmas period. Many families were in a much worse situation than we were as we knew our baby was getting better and just how lucky we were. Remembering the families we met, who had been supported by The Sick Children's Trust for months on end, at absolutely no cost, encouraged me to organise the fundraiser. Everyone on board was really supportive, especially when they found out more about The Sick Children's Trust."

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 the charity £30 to support a family for one night. **Acorn House Manager, Abi Abdel-aal, says:**

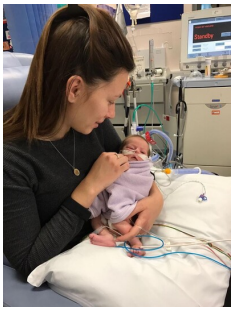
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“When Ryan and Tiffany arrived just two days before Christmas they were so worried about Sadie and it was obvious how important it was for them to be able to stay just two minutes away from where she was being treated. It was a real relief when she began to improve and the doctors reassured her parents she was going to make a full recovery.

“The money that Ryan and everyone aboard HMS Westminster has raised will have a huge impact by helping us support more families with children at Addenbrooke’s Hospital. We are really grateful for the generous donation and wish the naval officers the best of luck on their next voyage.”

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

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