Parents ask community to support charity who gave them a 'Home from Home'

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The parents of a little boy who needed lifesaving surgery at just a few hours old are asking their local community to help support The Sick Children's Trust who kept them by their son's hospital bedside, despite being 40 miles away from home.

Mark and Sarah Ramshaw's son, William, was born last September at North Tees hospital. However, within an hour of his birth the couple, from Stockton, realised something was wrong and were told that William had Down's syndrome, alongside an imperforate anus and breathing problems.

Within hours, William was rushed over 40 miles away from home to Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) for emergency surgery. William spent three weeks undergoing surgery and treatment at the specialist hospital. During this time however, his parents were able to stay close by as they were given free 'Home from Home' accommodation by The Sick Children's Trust.

Dad Mark says: "I remember grabbing on to a chair, feeling as if someone had pulled the world out from beneath my feet. Our heads were spinning.

"The staff at North Tees told us they had arranged accommodation nearby for us, and when we arrived, while William was in the operating theatre, we were taken to "the house" where we had been told we could stay.

"We had just handed over our new born baby to the surgeons and we were anxious and tearful when we arrived at The Sick Children's Trust's Crawford House. We had no belongings – we hadn't thought about our needs for a moment in those whirlwind hours. But we need not have worried – we were met by warm, friendly faces and assured that we would be looked after.

"Over the next three weeks we came to appreciate Crawford House more and more. When your baby is ill the last thing you want to do is leave the hospital grounds, and even the nearest hotel is too far away. As new parents faced with an unexpected diagnosis we needed to be together to support each other – I don't know how we would have coped with being apart, and neither of us was in any condition to drive when William was on intensive care."

Since bringing William home last October, the family have had two more stays at The Sick Children's Trust's Crawford House. Mark and Sarah are now calling on their local community to help raise funds for The Sick Children's Trust by getting involved with its new campaign, Pyjama Party. Pyjama Party is a fun filled day where children are sponsored to come to nursery or playgroup dressed in their favourite pyjamas and take part in various activities.

Mark continues: "It was the toughest time of our lives – the stress and worry were huge – and The Sick Children's Trust made it so much easier. That's why we want to help them, in whatever way we can, to raise awareness and further funds so more families can stay together when their loved ones are in hospital."

The Sick Children's Trust runs ten 'Homes from Home' two of which are located in Newcastle upon Tyne. **Crawford House Manager, Gail Stonley, says:**

"Crawford House has helped ease some of the worries that Mark and Sarah have had during William's hospital stays and we are so pleased we could help them in that way.

"The Sick Children's Trust supports over 4,000 families every year with free 'Home from Home' accommodation and is completely reliant on voluntary donations to do this. The Pyjama Party is a fun way for people to help the charity continue supporting families with seriously ill children."

For more information on The Sick Children's Trust's Pyjama Party, please visit: http://bit.ly/2bpm0ls or email fundraising@sickchildrentrust.org.

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