Parents of little boy born with life-threatening condition continue to thank charity by taking part in Big Chocolate Tea fundraiser

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A family who have already raised over £1,960 for The Sick Children's Trust have joined in with the charity's biggest annual fundraiser, Big Chocolate Tea, and raised a further £790 as thanks for supporting them when their son was critically ill in hospital.

Rebecca and Andrew Tierney, from Prudhoe, hosted a Big Chocolate Tea party to raise vital funds for The Sick Children's Trust, a charity that provides 'Homes from Home' to families with seriously ill children undergoing treatment in the UK's leading paediatric hospitals.

Rebecca and Andrew found themselves in the midst of every parent's worst nightmare when their three month old baby, Ethan, was diagnosed with a congenital heart condition. Seven months after diagnosis, Ethan underwent lifesaving open heart surgery at Freeman Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne. During this time, his worried parents were give a room at Scott House, free 'Home from Home' accommodation run by The Sick Children's Trust. Despite being allowed home just days after surgery, a week later Ethan was rushed back to the specialist hospital after contracting a streptococcal infection. While their son recovered, Rebecca and Andrew were again no more than a few minutes from his hospital bedside thanks to The Sick Children's Trust's family accommodation. **Mum Rebecca, says:**

"Words can't describe how distraught we were to find out that something was wrong with Ethan. We just thought he was a sleepy, quiet baby – never in our wildest dreams did we think this was because of a serious heart defect. It honesty felt like the end of the world. At three months old, Ethan was not yet strong enough to endure the major heart operation he needed, so we had found ourselves trapped in a nervous waiting game for seven months until he'd put on enough weight to cope with the procedure.

"Scott House was just a few minutes' walk from our son's bedside, which made leaving him every night that little bit easier. It also encouraged me take a step back from the situation when things got too overwhelming, recompose myself, and then return to the hospital in the best state possible to help our son. Being able to talk to other families staying in the house was also a massive comfort because often they were in a similar situation, which meant we could support each other. We will be forever grateful to The Sick Children's Trust."

Since his lifesaving heart surgery, Ethan has made a great recovery and is now a cheeky, energetic three year old. His strength has inspired Rebecca and Andrew to fundraise for the charity and since they began their endeavours they have raised over £2,750 for The Sick Children's Trust. **Rebecca continues:**

"We're delighted with how much money we have been able to add to our fundraising total by holding a Big Chocolate Tea party. My mum and sister helped me bake all the cakes for our guests whilst lots of other family members pitched in to help with the organisation, including setting up a raffle and tombola which was lots of fun! It was a lovely day and we'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came along and made it so special."

Every year The Sick Children's Trust provides much-needed emotional and practical support to around 4,000 families with seriously ill children in hospital. Although the accommodation is free of charge to families, the charity relies entirely on voluntary donations to run its houses and is calling for the nation to join in with Big Chocolate Tea so it can continue to help thousands of families stay together with their sick child when it matters most.

Last year, Big Chocolate Tea raised enough money to support 1,167 families with free 'Home from Home' accommodation and the charity hopes that this year's campaign will be an even greater success. **Scott House Manager, Linsey Brough says:**

"We're so grateful to the Tierney family for their continued support and want to say a huge thank you to them for joining in with Big Chocolate Tea and raising an amazing £790! It costs us £30 to support a family for one night in one of our ten 'Homes from Home' and we rely entirely on voluntary donations to do this, so the family's fundraising has raised enough money to provide 91 nights of accommodation for families whose lives have been thrown into turmoil."

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Supporters can choose to take part in Big Chocolate Tea at any point during the year and will receive a pack full of goodies to help host their event.

To find out how you can get involved with Big Chocolate Tea, please email bigchoctea@sickchildrenstrust.org or visit www.sickchildrenstrust.org/bigchoctea.

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