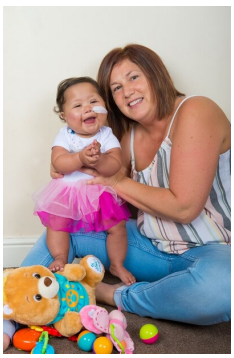
Parents Of Little Girl Not Expected To Survive Back Charity's Big Chocolate Tea Campaign

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Media:









The parents of a little girl who defied doctors' predictions that she would not survive are encouraging the nation to get involved with The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea campaign.

Lisa Thompkins and Buba Jallow, from Shipley were overjoyed when they found out they were expecting a baby girl. Their excitement turned to fear when a scan detected that their baby had a serious heart defect and might not make it. They were told that if she survived the pregnancy, she would require lifesaving surgery just hours after birth at Leeds General Infirmary (LGI). Taniesha was born weighing 5lb 2oz and within hours was diagnosed with Down's syndrome and required major surgery on her bowel.

The family were supported with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Eckersley House, run by The Sick Children's Trust, for three weeks while Taniesha underwent lifesaving treatment including major open heart surgery. Lisa and Buba, who became Eckersley House's 10,000th family, are now asking people to back the charity's biggest annual fundraiser by holding a bake sale, tea party or bake-off to raise money for Big Chocolate Tea. A donation of £30 from a Big Chocolate Tea event is enough to support a family for one night with vital free 'Home from Home' accommodation. **Mum of four, Lisa, says:**

"Looking back now, my emotions were a rollercoaster. Taniesha was on and off oxygen and ventilation as her breathing improved then deteriorated, then improved again. It was awful, especially knowing my poor baby had been through so much and still needed heart surgery.

"Being there at Eckersley House made this incredibly difficult time feel a bit more like normal life. I missed my other children desperately, but I knew I couldn't leave my baby when her life was in the balance. When Eckersley House came into our lives, it was a huge relief. My five year old could come and stay with us and my teenagers could visit any time they wanted. It meant I didn't feel guilty about focussing all my attention on Taniesha's recovery, as with Eckersley House, I could be there for them too.

"Of course, things didn't run smoothly. But despite every set back, Taniesha started to thrive. She's our miracle baby and such an important part of our family. Eckersley House gave us that time together to be there for her, when she was at her most vulnerable. We can't thank The Sick Children's Trust enough for everything they've done. It was horrendous, but they gave us the support we needed to be there for our baby, when the thing she needed most in the world was our love."

Lisa and Buba are joining in The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea campaign and are encouraging others to join in the fun too from Friday 21 April – Monday 1 May. Big Chocolate Tea aims to raise thousands of pounds to support families across the UK with 'Home from Home' accommodation when their child is sick in hospital. **Buba Jallow, Taniesha's Dad, adds:**

"I'd have given anything to trade places with my baby daughter. Anything to give her a normal life. But at least I was there every day. I was by her side, holding her tiny hand, helping her fight on. That's why we want to spread the word about The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea and encourage people to raise at least £30, to help more families stay just minutes from their loved ones."

Last year, Big Chocolate Tea raised £60,000 which gave 2,000 families free 'Home from Home' accommodation, keeping them together when it matters most. The Sick Children's Trust hopes this year's campaign will be an even greater success. **Eckersley House Manager, Jane McHale, says:**

"It's so wonderful to hear that Taniesha is getting on well – she's such a brave little girl and we're delighted that she's back home and enjoying time with her family.

"Big Chocolate Tea is all about getting together with friends, family and colleagues over tea and chocolate. At the same time, it's a chance to make a difference to families with a seriously ill child. If you can raise £30 by holding a Big Chocolate Tea event, your money will go towards supporting a family, keeping them together when it matters most."

Supporters can choose to take part in Big Chocolate Tea at any point during the year and will receive a free fundraising pack full of goodies to hold the perfect event. For more information and to request your

pack, please visit: http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/bigchoctea.



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