Parents thank The Sick Children’s Trust for giving them a ‘Home from Home’ close to their son’s hospital bedside

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The parents of a little boy who required specialist surgery at just a day old have thanked The Sick Children’s Trust for keeping them by his hospital bedside in free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation.

Parents Gabi and Nathan Matthews discovered at a pregnancy scan that their son, Jacob, had myelomeningocele – a form of spina bifida. Jacob’s neural tube (brain and spinal cord) failed to close and the neural tissue was exposed through his back. Without protective covering of the skin, the spinal cord becomes damaged and spinal fluid often leaks. As a result, Jacob needed an operation as soon as possible to avoid any further damage once born and because of the complex surgery, Jacob needed to be delivered in Leeds, at least a 30 minute drive from the couple’s home in Bradford.

Fortunately, Gabi and Nathan were told about support available from a charity, The Sick Children’s Trust, which runs free ‘Home from Home’ accommodation for families with seriously ill children in hospital. For the duration of Jacob’s hospital treatment, his parents were supported at Eckersley House. **Gabi says:**

“We knew before Jacob was born that we wouldn’t be taking him home straight away. In fact, Jacob would need major surgery the very next day, and he would spend the first three weeks of his life recovering in Leeds Children’s Hospital. We were frustrated to say the least – like any other first-time parents all we wanted to do was take our newborn baby home. Neither of us could imagine being separated from each other or our baby boy – especially when he had so much to go through during his first few days.

“Eckersley House has been a lifesaver for us, as it has for many other families. In the early days, it was particularly hard for me seeing other parents taking home their babies, especially while we’d be spending hours upon hours by Jacob’s side. By having a room in Eckersley House we realised we were not the only ones unable to take our child home, we were surrounded by other families in similar situations. We no longer felt so alone.”

Eckersley House, one of ten ‘Homes from Home’ run by The Sick Children’s Trust, is located just a few minutes’ walk from Leeds Children’s Hospital. The ‘Home from Home’ can support up to 23 families a night, 365 days a year. **Gabi continues:**

“We’ve been supported by The Sick Children’s Trust on two occasions, if it wasn’t for this charity we would’ve had to pay for a hotel room nearby. But even that would’ve felt like a long way from Jacob’s side. At Eckersley House, no matter what time of day or night we could be with our son in an instant. I remember once in the middle of the night saying to Nathan that I just wanted to see Jacob and as quick as a flash I was there by his hospital side. To have that access to your child in hospital is so important and something every parent with a seriously ill child should have.

“We would love to repay The Sick Children’s Trust for its support. Not only has it been a ‘Home from Home’ for me and Nathan, it’s became one to our wider family. On the wards, you can only have two visitors at a time so we would often take Jacob’s grandparents over to Eckersley House. We could do the things that we would’ve been doing had we been in our own home, like sitting down for a cup of tea and having a chat. Our family, and friends, have been so amazed with the support we’ve received from The Sick Children’s Trust that they’re raising money for the charity.

“Jacob is 19 months old now and has had four major surgeries but he’s defied all the odds set against him. He’s a cheeky little monkey – but he’s our monkey and we wouldn’t have it any other way!”

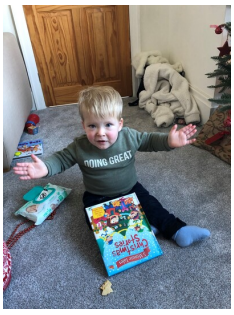
Every year The Sick Children’s Trust supports around 4,000 families with children undergoing specialist treatment in hospital – and it relies entirely on voluntary donations to do this. **Jane McHale, Eckersley House Manager, says:**

“When a child is seriously ill in hospital, all any family wants is to be there by their side giving them much needed comfort. We’re so pleased that we have been able to support Jacob’s parents at Eckersley House and that it has become a ‘Home from Home’ to them. As a charity, it costs us £30 to support a family for one night, so it means so much to us to hear all about the fundraising that Jacob’s family and friends are doing for Eckersley House. From all of us at The Sick Children’s Trust, we’d like to say a

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huge thank you.”

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

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