Parents trek 20 miles for charity as thanks for 'Home from Home'

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The parents of a little boy who, at just a few weeks old, underwent surgery are organising a sponsored walk to raise money for The Sick Children's Trust.

Stuart and Marie Mathers, from Darlington, experienced every parent's worst nightmare when their son Bertie became seriously unwell not long after being born. Just days after taking their son home, they noticed that Bertie could not stop projectile vomiting and when his symptoms didn't improve, they called 111 and were advised to take him to hospital. Bertie was admitted to hospital for three days before the doctors could make a diagnosis. Following this, Bertie was transferred to Newcastle upon Tyne's Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) where he was diagnosed with a stomach disorder where his muscle connecting his stomach and intestine was being restricted.

For four nights, Stuart, 31, and Marie, 26, were given free 'Home from Home' accommodation at The Sick Children's Trust's Crawford House. Crawford House is located at the RVI and supports families with seriously ill children in hospital so that they can be by their loved one's bedside. **Stuart, an Area Sales Manager for Patterson Medical, says:**

"Despite being first time parents we just knew something was wrong. We were told it was nothing to worry about, but he was so unwell that we decided to take matters into our own hands which finally got Bertie the urgent medical attention he needed. It was a very stressful, worrying and exhausting time for both of us. It was extremely hard for Marie as Bertie really wanted feeding, but we weren't allowed, so he would just scream and cry.

"That's why The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home' Crawford House was so important to us. It gave Marie some rest which she desperately needed and a space to clear her head. It meant we could be there for Bertie and support him when he needed it the most. Without Crawford House, our situation would have been much worse. When we were there, we were speaking to other families who had been living in Crawford House for 18 weeks – that would have been either a huge financial cost to them to stay in a hotel for that time, or it would have meant they couldn't be with their sick child all the time.

"Crawford House is massively appreciated by us and many others. The importance of keeping a family together at a time like this cannot be underestimated. So we have decided to do a 20 mile fundraising walk from Bridlington to Filey in hopefully nine hours. From this, we would like to raise enough money to support a family for two months in Crawford House just as a thank you for The Sick Children's Trust's help."

Crawford House has 23 family bedrooms, 14 bathrooms and a communal kitchen and dining room. In every bedroom, there is a direct telephone line to the ward where the family's sick child is being treated. **House Manager Gail Stonley says:**

"When a child is taken into hospital, no matter what age they are, it is one of the most stressful and worrying times for a family. With the added pressure of a child being treated far away from home it can be all too much. At The Sick Children's Trust we try and take away some of that stress by providing free 'Home from Home' accommodation just minutes from a child's hospital bedside.

"We'd like to say a huge thank you to Stuart and Marie for fundraising for us and wish them all the best. It costs around £30 a night to support a family in Crawford House, so they will be making a huge difference to many families."

To find out more about the couple's sponsored walk,
visit: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Mathers-Family?utm_id=25

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