Raising awareness for premature babies this World Prematurity Day

Friday 8 November, 2019

A charity that gives families with seriously ill children in hospital a comfortable place to stay, minutes from their child's hospital bedside, is joining a global movement to raise awareness of premature birth and the impact it can have on families.

The Sick Children's Trust is joining the charity Bliss and other leading organisations this World Prematurity Day, Sunday 17 November, to raise awareness of the experience parents with premature babies face in the days, weeks and months after their baby's arrival.

Prematurity is still the leading cause of death in children under five and over 164 babies born premature are admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) every day across the UK.

Stays in hospitals vary greatly, but according to a report by Bliss having a baby on NICU can cost on average £2,256 due to travel, accommodation, food and loss of earnings. The Sick Children's Trust helps to alleviate some of these concerns by giving families a place to stay, free of charge, just a few minutes' walk from their child's bedside. At the charity's 'Homes from Home' families have a clean and comfortable private bedroom, access to a kitchen to make meals, showers and laundry rooms, giving them some stability and comfort at what can be an uncertain time. **Chief Executive at The Sick Children's Trust, Jane Featherstone, said:**

"When a baby arrives prematurely, there's no time to plan. The Sick Children's Trust is here to give families one less thing to worry about by giving them a place to stay, free of charge, just minutes from their baby's side.

"Every day at The Sick Children's Trust we meet families with some of the sickest babies fighting for their lives on NICU. Life has been turned upside down within a matter of hours and often the whole family is separated. Giving parents a place to stay close by to their baby means they don't have to worry about being far away or leaving them alone in hospital. They can get a good night's rest, look after themselves and stay strong for their child.

"Devastatingly, not every baby makes it home. But we know that by giving parents a place to stay just minutes from their baby's side that no precious moment is missed."

Evidence shows better outcomes for babies when their parents are involved in providing hands-on care while they are in hospital. The Sick Children's Trust aims to help aid the recovery of seriously ill babies in hospital by supporting the well-being of the family through its 'Homes from Home' and dedicated staff across the country. This World Prematurity Day, The Sick Children's Trust is joining Bliss in encouraging parents of premature babies to share what they wish they had known to help other parents going through a similar experience.

Justin Irwin, Chief Executive of the premature and sick baby charity Bliss said: "World Prematurity Day is a chance to raise awareness of the impact that a baby's early arrival can have on the whole family.

"Nothing can prepare parents for how it feels if their baby is born premature and are in need of neonatal care. But it can be a huge support for them to know they aren't alone.

"This World Prematurity Day, we're asking anyone with an experience of prematurity to **share what they wish someone had told them when they first arrived on the neonatal unit** using our hashtag **#IWishIdKnown.**

"Having a premature baby can feel isolating and Bliss is here to support families affected by prematurity. To find out more or access support, visit bliss.org.uk."

It costs The Sick Children's Trust £30 to support a family for one night. £30 gives a family so much more than just a roof over their heads when their baby is in hospital. £30 gives them someone to talk to, and a calm place to rest with their family. To give a family with a premature baby a place to stay in one of the charity's 'Home from Home', donate £30 today by visiting: sickchildrenstrust.org

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Join The Sick Children’s Trust and Bliss on World Prematurity Day, Sunday 17 November by using #IWishIdKnown #WorldPrematurityDay on social media and by visiting the charities’ websites: sickchildrenstrust.org and bliss.org.uk

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