Sisters raise hundreds for Sick Children's Trust as thanks for keeping them together

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Two sisters have raised over £400 for The Sick Children's Trust to say thank you for keeping them together when the youngest underwent open heart surgery at Newcastle upon Tyne's Freeman Hospital.

The Mills sisters - Beth, 17, and Amy, 13, - from Whitley Bay, were supported by The Sick Children's Trust when Amy needed specialist treatment at Freeman Hospital earlier this year. While Amy underwent heart surgery, sister Beth was able to remain by her side as the charity provided her, along with parents Barbara and Geoff, with free 'Home from Home' accommodation at Scott House, just minutes away from Amy's hospital bedside.

When Amy was born, she was diagnosed with Noonan syndrome - a condition found in 1 in 2,500 children. Throughout her life, The Valley Garden's Middle School pupil has undergone numerous treatments, with open heart surgery as her latest procedure, where she spent four nights on the children's heart unit. **Mum Barbara says:**

"We are so proud of our girls' passion to thank The Sick Children's Trust for its support. Amy is doing really well recovery wise and couldn't wait to join in the charity's biggest fundraising campaign – Big Chocolate Tea. Last week at school she had a bake sale and raised £150, which will help more families in similar situations to ours. And last month Beth did the Tyne Bridge zip slide challenge raising over £300, she also volunteers at Scott House on a regular basis to give something back.

"The girls are so close, so the thought of being separated when Amy needed her procedure just added lots more stress to the situation. For years now, Amy has been in and out of hospital and has developed a phobia of needles – so the prospect of going it alone, was terrifying.

"For her, knowing that the three of us were there really relaxed her. She knew we would be there before she woke up, and before she went to sleep because we were just a few minutes away. And it gave us all comfort to know that if anything did go wrong, there was a direct telephone line from the ward to our bedroom which meant we'd know as soon as possible.

"Even though Whitley Bay isn't too far away from Freeman Hospital – when your child is so ill, that distance is simply just too far away. After her operation, Amy was losing a lot of blood which was very scary and frightening, we needed to all be together and be there for her which we could be because of The Sick Children's Trust."

It costs on average £30 per night to support a family in one of the charity's ten 'Homes from Home' which includes access to communal kitchens, bathrooms, living rooms and dining rooms alongside a direct telephone line from each bedroom to the hospital ward.

The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea fundraising campaign aims to raise thousands of pounds to help support more families across the UK with 'Home from Home' accommodation when their child is sick in hospital. Scott House Manager, Andrew Leadbitter, says:

"The girls have hearts of gold. It's great to see Amy progressing so well and we are delighted to have Beth as part of the team at Scott House.

"Helping Amy's family and enabling them to be together during this time is what The Sick Children's Trust is all about. We provide practical support, being located just minutes' from a child's hospital bed side and emotional support too. It costs £30 to support a family for one night, so if you, like Amy, would like to get involved with our Big Chocolate Tea campaign, please visit our website."

For more information on The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea event, please visit: www.sickchildrenstrust.org.

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