Thornaby couple call on others to donate to charity's Christmas appeal to keep families with sick children in hospital together

Monday 30 November, 2020

A couple who spent their spent their son's first Christmas in hospital are backing The Sick Children's Trust's Together this Christmas appeal to help keep families like theirs together this festive period.

Christina Baxter and Phil Bulmer, from Stockton-on-Tees, noticed something wasn't right with their son just days before Christmas 2019. Declan, now 14 months old, contracted a combination of respiratory syncytial virus, a tummy bug and MRSA. He spent eight weeks in Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary where he also underwent emergency bowel surgery after it became perforated. During his time in hospital, his parents along with his sister Lillian were given a warm and comfortable place to stay by The Sick Children's Trust at its 'Home from Home' Crawford House. By having a place to stay, just minutes from Declan's hospital bedside, meant the whole family could be together over the Christmas period and until Declan was well enough to be discharged home.

To thank the charity for its support, Christina and Phil are backing The Sick Children's Trust's Christmas appeal which is asking for donations of £30 to give a family with a seriously ill child in hospital a place to stay for one night over the festive period. **Christina said:**

"The nurse took one look at Declan when we arrived and sent us straight to A&E. The next time I saw him he was covered in wires and tubes. If we had left it any longer Declan might not be with us today – which I can't bear to think about. Both of us wanted to be with Declan, and neither of us wanted to leave Lillian. So, when we were told about The Sick Children's Trust and its 'Home from Home' Crawford House, which was just a few minutes' walk from Declan's bedside, we were relieved.

"Although it wasn't the Christmas we had imagined because we were staying at Crawford House we could stay late on Christmas Eve at Declan's bedside without worrying about making the journey home. We could go to bed, and Lillian still felt the excitement of Father Christmas coming to visit. Although we weren't home, he managed to find his way to her and she opened her presents before we went over to Declan on Christmas morning, where she helped him open his.

"Without The Sick Children's Trust's 'Home from Home,' I don't know what we would have done. It would have been so tiring travel two hours a day, if not longer, depending on traffic. We appreciate that we had a room in Crawford House and can't say thank you enough. We want to do some fundraising for the charity so that other families can be helped like we were. Crawford House was so close by that we never had to worry about not being with Declan. Everyone was so friendly, nothing was too much trouble for the staff and the other families staying there were extra support, despite all of us being worried for our little ones."

After a year of being separated from our loved ones, grandparents, brothers, sisters and friends, Christmastime is when we want to be together. The Sick Children's Trust wants to keep families together by their child's hospital bedside, and a donation of £30 can do that. **Jane Featherstone, Chief Executive at The Sick Children's Trust, said:**

"This year we're grateful for the times we can be together with loved ones. For the families that we will be supporting, with a child in hospital over the Christmas period, being together will be harder than ever.

"With a donation of £30 from you, we can ease their worries and give them a place to stay just minutes from their child's hospital bedside in one of our 'Homes from Home' and ensure that they can be together this Christmas."

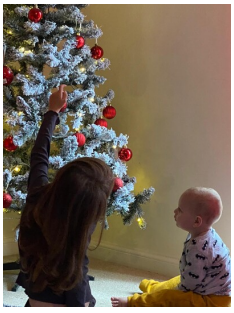
To donate to The Sick Children's Trust's Christmas appeal, visit sickchildrenstrust.org/donate

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