# Youngster backs chocolate campaign to raise money for Sick Children's Trust

**Wednesday 4 May, 2016**

A young lad who at just 14-years-old had a stroke is calling on his local community to support The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea campaign

Connor Lynes, 15, from Hull, had been playing rugby when he was tackled on the pitch. The following day, his Auntie Sara Lynes, and sister, Emily Lynes, found him collapsed on the bathroom floor. He was rushed to Hull Royal Infirmary, where he was admitted to resus and operated on, but required further specialist treatment at Leeds General Infirmary (LGI).

For five weeks Connor was treated at the LGI and during this time, Sara and Emily were given free 'Home from Home' accommodation by The Sick Children's Trust so that they could be a few minutes' walk from his bedside. Sara Lynes, who stayed at Eckersley House, says:

"The last thing I was thinking about, when we were travelling in that ambulance from Hull to Leeds was somewhere to stay. But I'm so grateful we were in someone else's thoughts and provided us with a free room at The Sick Children's Trust Eckersley House.

A massive weight was lifted off my shoulders, as it meant Emily could come over to Leeds and be there with us. Being a single parent, she would have been completely on her own for the five weeks Connor was treated at the LGI had it not been for Eckersley House. Connor would have also been without his sister which would have potentially set him back and my daughter would have been without her Mum – she needed me at this time, she took it really hard.

"Over the next few weeks Eckersley House provided us respite. It was a place to go which was close by but far enough away from the wards when you needed some time. Once Connor woke up from his coma, we realised he had no feeling down one side of his body – the doctors told us he could be disabled. Then within a week Connor got up and walked…he amazed everyone.

"It was a complete emotional rollercoaster for me. One day I was told I could lose him, the next I was told he would be disabled and then I saw him get up and walk across the room. It was incredible.

"Connor has certainly got some guts. To begin his recovery the way he did amazed everyone, but I truly believe that that was because we were so close - it significantly helped him. Hospital for any person or family can be a very lonely place, and it makes a huge difference for a child to have their family close by. It helped motivate Connor, it made him smile to see his sister and he knew we were only across the road. It made a world of difference.

"We left the LGI after five weeks and went back to the Hull Royal Infirmary – but that's not where Connor's story ends. Connor isn't back at school just yet, his major stroke and subsequent strokes have had a big impact on his memory and his energy, and the clot on his brain is still there."

Sara, Connor and Emily are joining The Sick Children's Trust's Big Chocolate Tea campaign and are calling for their local community to get involved too. Big Chocolate Tea 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. It costs on average £30 per night to provide a family with a room for one night in one of the charity's '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. Eckersley House Manager Jane McHale says:

"Connor popped in to Eckersley House just a few weeks ago with a donation of chocolate eggs for our resident families – he's so passionate about helping others, especially the families here at Eckersley House. It's very important that when a child is taken to hospital to receive critical treatment, that there family are with them and just minutes from their hospital bedside – and that's why Big Chocolate Tea is so important. It's a chance to make a difference to families with seriously ill children, by getting together with friends, family and colleagues over tea and chocolate.

"If you can raise £30 by holding a Big Chocolate Tea event, your money will go towards supporting a

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family, keeping them together when it matters most.”

If you’d like to find out more about how you can get involved, please visit: http://www.sickchildrenstrust.org/bigchoctea/

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