



Making life better for sick children in Sussex & Surrey

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James' story

Dear <salutation>

We're very lucky to have three lovely children, James (10), Mia (8) and Luca (3). Mia and Luca are very sociable and enjoy playing with their friends and going to the cinema.

James is also very sociable, but he is unique. From the beginning we sensed he'd be different and at 10 months our fears were confirmed when a scan showed he had an underdeveloped brain. We were told he had Global Delay, but had no idea what it meant and still today it's indefinable. No two people with this condition are the same or face the same challenges.

That day at the hospital, we were told to go home and grieve for the little boy James would never be.

For James, Global Delay means he has severe learning difficulties and limited interaction with others – he can't play with anyone but still wants to be in their company. He wants to be with us all the time, which can be exhausting. Even simple tasks become a real struggle.

It's upsetting for both of us to compare James with other 10 year olds. Other parents can discuss milestones and achievements, while we're unsure of what the next day will bring, let alone the future. James' development is slow but constant and this is all we can hope for: **for him, every milestone is the greatest achievement and a million times more rewarding.**

If James doesn't get the attention he wants, **he vents his frustration physically:** he's smashed some of our family portraits and sometimes lashes out at his little brother. Mia and Luca are very understanding and cope well with his behaviour. Mia even takes on the role of a carer sometimes, looking after her younger brother while we manage James' needs. It sounds awful but we often feel like a family of four plus James.

When James first attended Beeches Respite Centre in Reigate **we felt an enormous sense of guilt** and concern for his wellbeing. Would they care for him properly? Would the staff understand him? We soon realised that we didn't need to worry.

Continued overleaf..



Having fun on his rocking horse, aged 3



James with the whole family



With his new bike, we can now go out cycling as a family

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For office use only: Beeches, Reigate Project code: BE110110.1

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Beeches is fantastic for James and he often doesn't want to leave. He loves the staff and the one-to-one care is priceless. When he's at the centre, simple things like our breakfast become quick and easy, although we always feel something's missing when he's away.

Now that winter is upon us, outdoor trips at Beeches are limited. The children and staff need new and fresh activities and the centre desperately needs some sensory play facilities to stimulate and develop the children's minds. This is why **Rockinghorse wants to build a new sensory playroom** where all of the children will be able to make things happen at the push of a button and take control of their own environment.

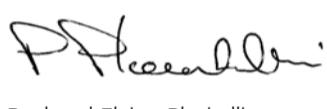

To turn a light on, make a sound or change the colour of something on his own will be great for James' development, as well as a lot of fun!

James will never go to university, get married, or have children. **All we can hope is that he continues to progress and that he's happy.**

Nothing brings this kind of project to life like hearing directly from people who are affected. We hope that by reading this you can begin to understand the importance of Rockinghorse's project and how all of the children at Beeches need your help.

The sensory room will cost almost £75,000. Whether you can give £2 or £200, your donation will really make a difference to local children.

Thanks for reading our story.

 and 

Paul and Elaine Placitelli

P.S. I'm running the London Marathon next year to raise funds for Beeches. You too can make a difference today by donating what you can to Rockinghorse. Paul.



Trampolining on Brighton beach



Playing in the garden (aged 8)

What your money will go towards

Rockinghorse needs your help to raise £74,831 for a sensory playroom at Beeches Bungalow Respite Centre in Reigate.

The specialised room will provide 5 to 18 year-olds who have physical and learning disabilities with a place to have fun, explore their environment or relax.

The room will be divided into four areas, each with a different focus to cater to varying ages, abilities and tastes. Film, music, lighting and texture will be used to help develop children's social and communication skills with quiet or dark areas for relaxation.

The respite centre offers vital support to families who have children with special needs by offering day care services and overnight stays to help relieve some of the pressure and strains that parents can experience.



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