



Sophia is cared for at Acorns for the Three Counties. From this hospice we provide support to children and families across Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and South Warwickshire.

Sophia Marshall is a little miracle. At two days old, she suffered a cardiac arrest in her father's arms. For dad Samuel and mum Chantelle it was truly terrifying, and the first six months of their baby girl's life was then spent in hospital.

Mum, Chantelle explains more "We had a really scary start with Sophia. We didn't really know what was happening. We were panicked. The cardiac arrest starved her of oxygen and caused eight brain bleeds.

"The doctors discovered that Sophia had 11 heart defects, which is what caused the cardiac arrest. They also found out that she has a condition called heterotaxy. This means that although she has all her organs they aren't in the right place, so this causes lots of complications."

Sophia and her family were referred to Acorns when she was eight months old.

"We were referred by our community nurse. We'd heard of Acorns, but we didn't understand fully what they did, we just knew that it was a children's hospice.

"I think the nurse could tell by my face that I didn't like the thought of Sophia going to a hospice. When you hear the word 'hospice' you think of the end of life, but the nurse told me Acorns does more than that.

*"So, we went and had a look. I was very nervous to walk through the door, but we got the warmest welcome. There were children and staff having fun and smiling."*

While mum Chantelle isn't quite ready for overnight stays, Sophia benefits from a whole range of services including stay and play groups, hydrotherapy and day care. Both Chantelle and husband Samuel receive support through Acorns parents' groups.

*"Coming to Acorns is great for me too because I meet other parents. We all have very different stories, but they are all quite relatable. Until you've been through a journey like this, I don't think you truly understand what it's like.*

*"It's hard being 'that' mum - the one who is always worried about their child and has to keep an eye on them. At Acorns everyone understands and will talk to you about what is going on with you. I feel like the normal mum for once when I'm here."*

*"Sophia was the tiniest little baby when she first started coming to Acorns. She's now walking and talking and is happy running off with the nurses. She gets so excited when she knows she's coming.*

*"Coming to Acorns was the best thing we ever did. I'm so happy when we're here. This is definitely our happy place."*