



Erica Strudley (far right) celebrates with the care team at Acorns in the Black Country. Full story [here](#).

The long-term future of Acorns Children's Hospice in the Black Country is secure

22nd April 2021

Acorns would like to express our deep gratitude to the many people and organisations who have so generously supported the Save Acorns Black Country Hospice Appeal since it was launched in July 2019.

The goal of the Appeal was to raise the funds needed to secure the long-term future of our specialist care service at Acorns in the Black Country, based in Walsall.

We are therefore truly overjoyed to be able to announce that donations from the incredible public response to the Save Acorns Black Country Hospice Appeal over the past two years have now secured the long-term future of our children's hospice in Walsall.

This success is the result of an exceptionally generous community response, based upon an absolute determination to see the only children's hospice in the Black Country keep its doors open for any child who needs this specialist care and support, now and in the future.

Thanks to this incredible support, not only have our nurses and Family Services teams continued to care for children and support their families every single day of the coronavirus pandemic, but we can now once again plan our future services at the hospice with confidence in the long-term future.

We would like to say a massive and heartfelt **thank you** to the local community who have supported our Appeal so generously.

We can now be confident about the future but, like all charities, Acorns will always depend on donations from our local community, and the money we make from our charity shops.

Please keep supporting Acorns in the Black Country, so we can be there for every child and their family who needs us, now and in the future.

A powerful community response

Everyone at Acorns would like to thank the local community and their elected representatives, who have shown such appreciation for the importance of the care provided by Acorns in the Black Country, and supported our Appeal.

We would also like to thank the team who work or volunteer at our Walsall hospice for their resilience and dedication to the children and families they care for at Acorns.

Since March 2020, well under a year after our hospice was first placed at risk of closure, they have had to deal with the unprecedented challenges of caring for children during the Coronavirus emergency.



Thanks to success of this appeal, the Walsall hospice has been open every day of the Covid-19 pandemic

The courage and professionalism of this incredible team have meant that our hospice in Walsall has stayed open and cared for children staying with us every day of the pandemic so far.

Our Family Service teams have also provided constant friendship, practical, emotional and bereavement support to parents, brothers and sisters, and grandparents of the children we care for over this period.



Aimee thanks Acorns for the delivery of food and essentials to her family during lockdown

Our volunteers, most of whom were not able to come to the hospices for the past year due to risks to their own health, have kept in touch with families by phone or video, as well as delivering food parcels, household essentials and Christmas presents direct to the doorsteps of families supported by Acorns.

Families of children with serious health conditions have obviously found lockdown particularly difficult. Many have described the support from Acorns over the past year as a lifeline. We are very proud at having been able to support some of the most vulnerable young members of our local community throughout the pandemic.

It is deeply humbling that the main reason our Black Country hospice has been able to offer this service is because of the incredible response to the Save Acorns Black Country Hospice Appeal since its launch in July 2019.

A truly incredible fundraising effort

We would like to thank everyone who has donated to Save Acorns Black Country Hospice Appeal. You have given so generously to collections in pubs, at sports grounds and at outdoor events. You have sent in donations of your own and sponsored friends and family to do wonderful and amazing fundraising challenges. You have organised events for us or asked your employer to consider us as your charity of the year.

Taken together, everything you have done represents such a heart-warming success of community action and generosity and it is thanks to you that the long-term future of our Walsall hospice is now secure.



Mark Lyttle and fellow fundraisers during a bucket collection at Walsall Football Club



James Wright completed 31 marathons in 31 days for the Appeal in 2019, raising £7,000. Story [here](#).

Acorns would also like to again express our deep gratitude to the NHS for the new pledges of financial support nationally and locally in the summer of 2019, and for the importance they attach to children's hospice care to all local communities in the UK.

These pledges gave us the time and the opportunity to launch our own fundraising appeal. Like all adult and children's hospices, Acorns has also been exceptionally well supported by the NHS during the Covid crisis, allowing us to

deliver our care even when our shops have been closed, and our fundraising restricted.

What next for Acorns in the Black Country?

Now that the future of the Black Country hospice is assured, our next plan is to refurbish all of the children's bedrooms in the building, something that has not been done since we first opened our hospice in Walsall in 2000 and which we had to keep delaying when the future of the hospice was at risk.

This is a lovely project to be able to plan, as we know how much difference this will make to children and families staying with us.

We rely on fundraising for the majority of funds needed to keep Acorns going, but raising funds specifically for the new bedrooms will now become our next fundraising focus in the Black Country. We will announce more details in due course.

Like all charities, Acorns relies on fundraising to continue providing vital care to families, wherever they need it - whether that's in the hospice, in the community, in family homes or providing support and a reassuring voice over the phone. We wouldn't be able to do all this without your generous support. Please keep giving to Acorns so we can always be there for families – now and in the future.



Isabella Lyttle in the craft room at Acorns.

Isabella's Place

"We always had hope that Acorns wouldn't be closing because how on earth could it? How on earth could any other family go through what we've been through, and not have the support and love you feel as soon as you come through those doors?"
- Mark Lyttle, Isabella's dad.

When she was just three years old Mark Lyttle and Jen Dalton's daughter Isabella was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare childhood cancer. Isabella and her family used Acorns in the Black Country for a number of years, and the Walsall hospice became like a second home.

Sadly, in April 2019, after a long and incredibly brave battle with the condition, Isabella passed away, aged just 11.

Less than two months later, Acorns had to announce the potential closure of the Walsall hospice due to funding concerns. Isabella's parents were determined this would not happen, and spearheaded the campaign to save the Walsall hospice. Their passion for Acorns, their belief, their tireless commitment to championing Acorns cause galvanised the community, brought our plight to local and national media and caught the attention of local MPs and Westminster decision-makers.

They recognised on a deep and personal level how important the service is to local families like theirs. A vital service of love, care and support that the local community simply couldn't afford to lose.

"The support Acorns has given to Isabella and to us as parents over the years has just been incredible and without them we just don't know what we'd have done. When times are tough and you don't know where to go or what to do, Acorns knew what we needed even before we did."



Mark Lyttle (5th from the right) meets eight Black Country MPs at Westminster in June 2019.

One of the places Isabella loved to spend many happy hours was in the craft room at Acorns. In honour of this wonderful brave girl, and in gratitude to the extraordinary efforts of her parents in saving our hospice, we will be naming the Arts and Crafts room "Isabella's Place" in her memory.



"Our beautiful, courageous and fearless little girl always had a smile on her face, despite what she went through. A big part of the reason for that smile was Acorns in Walsall. It was a place that Isabella loved to visit when she was well enough to be out of hospital and quickly became like home to her."

"So much that defines Isabella comes from Acorns and I often think that everything that defines Acorns is just pure Isabella and that makes me smile."

Isabella's story is intertwined with ours, and thanks to the support of local people like Mark and Jen, countless more children and families will be able to access the children's hospice care and support they need, long into the future. For as long as there will be a children's hospice in Walsall, this will be Isabella's Place.



82-year-old war veteran Brian Freeth completes a 5-mile walk in aid of the Appeal

Thank you

The Save Acorns Black Country Hospice Appeal has taught us that a charity like Acorns can only operate with the active support of our local community.

The last two years have been so humbling for all of us at Acorns, to see the level of support we now enjoy across the Black Country. We will do all we can to retain that support, and to keep reminding our supporters about the difference they are making to local children and their families.

The success of this Appeal has been a wonderful expression of support from the Black Country community, that they want this local children's hospice service to be there for any child or family in the region that needs our support.

A huge and heartfelt thanks from everyone in the Acorns family to Walsall and the Black Country. Your generosity will never be forgotten.

Some highlights from the Save Acorns Black Country Hospice Appeal



Fundraiser David Wall walks 4 million steps to raise funds for the Appeal



Blackheath Acorns shop volunteer Alison has a sponsored head shave for the Appeal



An impressive £12,000 is raised for Acorns from the Nachural Summer Ball and Business Awards



West Brom stars Kyle Bartley and Romaine Sawyers meet Oscar-Ray and his mum Charlotte at Acorns



Steven Knight CBE and Andy Street CBE at Acorns 'In Conversation' event in aid of the Appeal



Kind-hearted schoolgirl Abbey raises Appeal funds from a lemonade stall



Poet, and Acorns Patron, Benjamin Zephaniah visits the hospice



Staff from whg complete a sponsored walk for Acorns



Parents of Isabella, Mark Lyttle and Jen Dalton (front) help galvanise the community as the Appeal total reaches £500,000



The Acorns Glow Walk raises funds for the Appeal and features Walsall Football Club star Mat Sadler



West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street is announced as Patron of the Appeal



The Appeal marks its one-year anniversary in July 2020 with Acorns Patron Adil Ray OBE

Team Isabella conquer Snowdon for the Appeal



Bilston company Salisbury Poultry donate £30,000 to the Appeal



Supporter Andy Brown releases a CD in support of the Appeal. Pictured here with Walsall South MP Valerie Vaz and Thomas at Acorns



Hospice staff collectively run one mile every hour for 24 hours, with Deputy Head Nurse Carmel running 24 miles in one go, raising over £3,000