



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Dad Takes on 55km Challenge in Memory of Daughter

A DAD has completed a gruelling 55km run between Sheffield and Leeds to raise funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital after it cared for his daughter who was born 15 weeks premature.

Ciro Theaker is an Occupational Therapist at Cygnet Hospital Sheffield, a mental health service run by Cygnet Health Care which offers a low secure service for women, children and adolescents.

Explaining where the challenge idea originated, Ciro said: "The whole thing started as some of our ladies on the ward made some amazing Christmas cards and I asked them if they could make more for us to sell for charity. It evolved into a raffle and bake sale too. I then ended up being encouraged to take on this extreme challenge.

"We chose Great Ormond Street as the ladies who were involved wanted a charity to help children and families over Christmas. I used to work at a children's hospital a few years ago and I used to help so many babies, toddlers and children on a daily basis.

"But one day my own daughter was very ill and she passed away and there was nothing I could have done about it. I wanted to try and help as many children as I could from that moment on wherever it was possible so as few people as possible have to go through that pain."

Ciro said his daughter, named Sophia, was born 15 weeks prematurely at just 25 weeks and despite receiving first-class care from the hospital, she died a few days after birth.

Ciro added: "She was just born very tiny and early so her organs were struggling to give her what she needed, she was only with us for a few days. Her name was Sophia.

"She was always at the forefront of my mind during this challenge. Every day is a chance to make a difference. This extraordinary hospital has always depended on charitable support to give seriously ill children the best chance to fulfil their potential."

Talking about the challenge itself, Ciro explained how he set off from Sheffield just before 3.00am. Describing the run, he said: "The first third of the route, from Sheffield to Barnsley, was really nice. The route took me through the countryside and lots of nice scenery and then running through Barnsley centre seeing all the Christmas lights was also really lovely to see.

"The middle section of the run from Barnsley to Wakefield was the hardest as most of it was just one long 5-mile road. It seemed endless. After a while, the road ended and the sun came up and I managed to get a beautiful view of a reservoir. Halfway between Barnsley and Wakefield is where my estimated remaining time had fallen below my elapsed time which is where I believed for the first time that it was fully possible.

"The last third was when it rained which was really refreshing. During the last two hours I just pushed and ran as fast as I was physically able to. I remember being about an hour and a half out and seeing the sign saying "Welcome to Leeds" and I knew that's when I could do it."

Finishing after midday, the epic effort took Ciro 8hours and 42minutes to complete.

He added: "It was an amazing experience, I always knew I would do it no matter how tough it got and I never thought of stopping or giving up for a single second."

To donate, go to <https://www.gofundme.com/f/ciros-55km-run-sheffield-to-leeds>

Ends

Notes to Editors:

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