

# Joey switches the Christmas lights on at the Sick Kids

Eleven-month-old, Joey Sharp has been a patient at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People since he was born. He has had two life-saving operations, and continues to undergo chemotherapy treatment for a brain tumour diagnosed when he was only days old.

Last night he was the child chosen to press the button to light up the Christmas tree at the hospital – which he did along with a little help from his big sister Carly (3) and his parents. Forth One's Boogie in the Morning introduced the wee boy and began the countdown.



Joey with his parents

Mum Sam said: "Our little Joey was only 12 days old when he had emergency surgery in December last year. Hours before, we were given the devastating news that he had a brain tumour.

"We were told to prepare for the worst. Our world had shattered. I had been making Christmas lists, buying presents and organising family fun. Suddenly, it all

seemed hopeless.

"After eight agonising hours, 50% of the tumour was removed. But Joey was still seriously ill and needed a second operation. The days passed in a blur as we sat by his side in Intensive Care.

"Two days before Christmas, he had his second brain surgery. This time, they removed 98% of the tumour, but we still had a way to go. With six long months of intensive chemotherapy ahead, we were determined to make the most of every moment."

Sam and husband Steven will always be grateful for all the care and support both they, Joey and Carly received while in hospital over the festive period.

The family support Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity's (EHC) new Christmas appeal, which asks supporters to help "Light Up Christmas" for those seriously ill children and young people facing a hospital stay this December.

Sam continued: "Throughout our time in hospital, EHC was there for us at every turn, supporting us on the ward when none of our family or friends could visit.

"The charity's activities gave us a break from our daily reality. Seeing Joey respond to bubbles in baby sensory sessions, and hearing singing and live music was wonderful. It gave us hope. The change that came over the ward when the charity arrived was amazing, everyone's faces lit up.

"On Christmas Day, Covid rules were relaxed and we were allowed to be together. EHC made sure our time was magical. They showered the kids with gifts and involved Carly in all the fun. The best gift of all was seeing her and her baby brother together for the first time since he was admitted.

"In March, we were transferred to the new Royal Hospital for

Children and Young People. We felt anxious leaving the old Sick Kids but the moment we arrived we were reassured with the most wonderful welcome. The new hospital is made for children and families. It's a bright, fun, friendly space that supporters of the charity should be proud to have made possible.

"Joey is now 11 months old, cancer free and growing stronger every day. Without doubt, the support from ECHC made a huge difference to his recovery and our first memories as a family so it was wonderful to have him be the first to switch on the Christmas lights for the charity at the new hospital!"



Children, families and staff gathered at the hospital entrance and watching on from windows were treated to a musical performance by Edinburgh Brass Band before watching Joey and his family light up the giant Christmas tree – gifted to ECHC by Conifox Adventure Park.

Victoria Buchanan, from ECHC, said: "We would like to say an enormous thank you to Conifox Adventure Park, Edinburgh Brass Band, Boogie in the Morning and Joey and his family for helping to make our first ever Christmas Light Switch On at the new hospital so special.

"Every year, ECHC makes Christmas magical for children in hospital by creating a living advent calendar around the wards with a new surprise behind each door, with everything from a real ballerina to festive magic sessions and a samba band! We also fund the hospital play team and Christmas gifts to make sure treats and distractions are always available to bring smiles and comfort.

"This is our first year in our new home at Little France, so we are determined to make it the biggest and best Christmas yet. Although we have lit up the building, we still need help

to Light Up Christmas and make sure no child or young person in hospital misses out on the joy of the festive season.

“We rely solely on donations to do this. Please help by making a donation to ECHC this Christmas. You could Light Up Christmas for a child in hospital this December.”

To donate now to ECHC’s Light Up Christmas appeal, visit [www.echcharity.org/christmas](http://www.echcharity.org/christmas)

