

## Shining example

chronicle comment

THE effect of significantly reduced funding from Government into the public sector has had serious implications in communities.

The more deprived areas have seen groups and charities which worked with families to improve their lives being forced to stop as the money dries up.

The effect of this is potentially profound, with those most in need losing vital assistance to aspire to a better life.

This background makes the achievement of the Riverside Children's Centre all the more vital and remarkable.

The centre was judged as outstanding - the highest possible accolade - following a visit by inspectors from Ofsted.

The centre is not merely completing a box-ticking exercise; it is making a tangible difference to people's lives.

In an area where academic achievement is an ongoing issue, to guide 34 parents towards a nationally-recognised qualification is an achievement of some stature.

It is the kind of proactive work that Prime Minister David Cameron appears to have advocated through his vision of the Big Society.

The Government's decision to cut hard and fast to tackle the huge national deficit has made having a targeted influence at a local level all the more difficult.

The admirable work of everyone at the Riverside Children's Centre has demonstrated a difference can be made - and it is an example which Ministers should take notice of and encourage more widely.

## Family of twin girl born with only half her



**GOOD CAUSE** Ben Shepherd with Sebastian and a friend. Right, Sebastian with dad Ivan and mam Nadine

TELEVISION presenter Ben Shepherd has developed a special relationship with the Freeman Hospital's heart unit after seeing for himself how the dedicated team saved his friend Ivan's son.

Ivan and his wife Nadine Hollingsworth were told their son Sebastian was suffering from congenital heart defect Tetralogy of Fallot when he was just 15 hours old.

Sixteen weeks later, the team at the Freeman carried out lifesaving surgery on tiny Sebastian and, ever since then, the couple have channelled their efforts into fundraising for the Children's Heart Unit Fund, through a fund set up called Seb4Chuf.

Pharmaceutical rep Ivan, 35, of Whitley Bay, is a former competitive athlete, so running seemed an ideal way to raise funds for his cause.

And his sporty university pal Ben has been more than happy to join him.

Together, the pair last year ran Coast to Coast - from Whitehaven to Tynemouth - and this year they're making the fundraising extra challenging by cycling one way, then running back.

Ben said: "Ivan and I have been friends since childhood and being a father of two healthy boys, I can't imagine what Ivan and Nadine went

## Telly presenter Ben Shephard's marathon effort for little fighter



through when, hours after their son Sebastian was born. They had to deal with the painful reality of him having a congenital heart defect.

"Ivan and Nadine set about raising money for the Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF) at the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle, to help other children like Seb.

"When Ivan called me to ask if I fancied a little sporting challenge to help them in their quest to raise money for CHUF I stupidly agreed.

"So, last year, joined by some other friends, we ran the Coast-to-Coast route from Whitehaven to Tynemouth, which was a marathon a day for five days.

"Seb has had to undergo all sorts of incredibly invasive, painful and scary tests and even open heart surgery.

"The courage he showed and the resilience of his parents, coupled with the skills and care at the Children's Heart Unit at the Free-



man, is exactly why I wanted to get involved in this brutal challenge.

"Seb has to go through unimaginable pain and confront some very real fears at a ridiculously young age.

"It is for all of these reasons and wanting to continue to support the amazing work of the Children's Heart Unit at the Freeman that we have decided to make this year's challenge even bigger and even harder.

"We'll cycle 140 miles from Tynemouth to Whitehaven in two days, then run five marathons in five days back to Tynemouth and try and raise as much money and PR for the unit and CHUF as we possibly can."

For more information about the run and to make a donation, visit [www.seb4chuf.org.uk](http://www.seb4chuf.org.uk)

## heart working praise Freeman's pioneering staff



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WATCHING the twin girls laugh and play together it's almost impossible to tell them apart - let alone that one of them was born with half a heart.

Yet that's the rare condition that miracle girl Yasmin Bannister conquers on a daily basis because only one side of her heart works properly.

The four-year-old almost died when she was born. Doctors had to resuscitate her three times before she could be whisked away for expert treatment at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital.

Today, having endured her sixth and final major operation, Yasmin is back home in Prudhoe, Northumberland, and looking forward to the future - and her parents say it's all down to the amazing team at the children's heart unit.

Dad Paul, 44, said: "She's responded exceptionally well. The staff have been amazing. You're not a patient at the Freeman, you're part of a family. It's not a family you choose to join, but boy are you glad to be a part when you have to be."

Yasmin and her twin Erin were born minutes apart at the RVI on September 8, 2006, with Yasmin weighing just 3lb 6oz compared to Erin's 4lb 8oz.

Within an hour she had been taken to the Freeman, where medics carried out life-saving open heart surgery for the first time when she was just 11 days old.

As soon as she came into the world, surgeons knew exactly how to treat her as she was still in her mum's womb when she was diagnosed with Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome - a condition affecting one in 500,000 babies when the left side of the heart fails to form properly.

Instead of having two pumping chambers there is only one - but three weeks ago the team carried out a pioneering Fontan operation.

It was the last in a series of innovative procedures which has completely changed Yasmin's cardio-vascular system so that the working side of her heart pumps blood through her body, while her left calf muscle acts as the other pump, pushing the blood back to her lungs.

Now back home with dad Paul, a consultant lecturer at South Tyneside college, and mum Anna, a former primary school teacher, Yasmin is happy to be a typical youngster obsessed with Disney princesses, fancy dress and playing games

# We can't thank team enough for saving Yasmin

with her sisters Erin and India, 11 months, and younger brother Jocelyn, three.

And Paul and Anna, 31, are determined not to wrap her up in cotton wool, but give her every opportunity to live life to the full, and the youngster, soon to return to class at St Matthew's Primary School in Prudhoe, is taking everything in her stride.

Anna, who used to teach at New Silksworth Primary School, said: "Yasmin has always been aware that she's got a poorly heart and that the doctors are trying to make it right.

"She loves being in the hospital - even now she wants to go back in and be a patient, probably because she's allowed to eat breakfast in bed and ice cream at eight o'clock at night.

"When she was younger she wouldn't co-operate when they wanted to carry out tests, but now she's very matter of fact about it. It sometimes breaks your heart that she knows the routine.

"Sometimes she and Erin play nurses and doctors and it's the most in-depth game ever because she knows that consultants wear different coloured gowns to the nurses and some medical terms too."

The family are full of praise for the heart unit and are adamant it should survive the current Government review of the UK's services.

"The words 'thank you' never seem enough," said Paul.

"The staff have all been amazing, from the domestic workers up to the consultants. She's not just our daughter, she's theirs too. I don't want the unit to survive just for my daughter - it's for all children and future generations. It could be my kids' kids, or your nieces and nephews that need their help, so everyone needs to be picking up the phone and speaking to their MP to keep it open."

Born with one working kidney, baby Erin defies the odds: Page 14



PICTURE: SIMON HOBSON www.chroniclive.co.uk/buyphoto ref: 0048281

## Hanna saved by unit's amazing work

LEADING specialists at an under-threat children's heart unit have undertaken a groundbreaking heart transplant as the campaign to keep operations at the unit steps up a gear.

Seven-year-old Hanna Adnan from Edinburgh has undergone an operation at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital's children's heart unit.

The youngster's heart failed several times and she is the only person in the world to have been on an artificial heart pump on three distinct cycles of support.

Doctors finally found a donor heart for her and she is now recovering in the children's heart unit.

The unit is under threat after plans were revealed earlier this year to cut the number of hospitals performing youngsters' heart surgery in the UK from 11 to as few as six or seven.

Within one of the plans, the Freeman's unit would be closed to operations and children in the region needing specialist heart surgery would be transferred to Leeds.

Hanna's case is the latest to strengthen the campaign to prevent the unit from closing.

There are just two weeks to go until NHS Safe and Sustainable closes its four-month consultation on the future of children's congenital heart services.

The Chronicle's campaign to help keep operations at the unit, which started last Monday, has seen the number of consultation responses increase from 760 to 1,058.

Rachel Chapman, director of public engagement for NHS North of Tyne, said: "We're very grateful to the Chronicle for the campaign.

"It has helped raise awareness of the consultation in the final weeks so people can put forward their views.

"It's important that we continue to get the message out that people need to show their support."

Nick Brown, MP for Newcastle East, said: "Lives are at stake here. The Freeman Hospital's children's heart unit is an essential, national resource undertaking work other units can't.

"The operation that this little girl has had just emphasises even more how important this life-saving unit is."

## How you can help

THERE are a number of ways people can respond to the public consultation before it closes on July 1.

■ Complete a response form online at [www.ipsos-mori.com/safeandsustainable](http://www.ipsos-mori.com/safeandsustainable) or request a hard copy from Shirley Redgrave at [shirley.redgrave@northoftyne.nhs.uk](mailto:shirley.redgrave@northoftyne.nhs.uk) or by telephoning 0191 217 2758.

■ Post a letter with your comments using the address: Freeport RSLT-SRLZ-JYYY, Safe and Sustainable, Ipsos MORI, Research Services House, Elm Grove Road, Harrow, HA1 2QG.

■ Text "HEART" to 85001 free of charge - you will be sent a question asking for your views on the proposals for change.

## The choices on the table

**OPTION A:** Seven surgical centres at: Freeman Hospital, Newcastle; Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool; Glenfield Hospital, Leicester; Birmingham Children's Hospital; Bristol Royal Hospital for Children; Two centres in London.

**OPTION B:** Seven surgical centres at: Freeman Hospital, Newcastle; Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool;

Birmingham Children's Hospital; Bristol Royal Hospital for Children; Southampton General Hospital; Two centres in London.

**OPTION C:** Six surgical centres at: Freeman Hospital, Newcastle; Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool; Birmingham Children's Hospital; Bristol Royal Hospital for Children; Two centres in London.

**OPTION D:** Six surgical centres at: Leeds General Infirmary; Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool; Birmingham Children's Hospital; Bristol Royal Hospital for Children; Two centres in London.

**LONDON:** The preferred two London centres are: Evelina Children's Hospital; Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children.



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