



My twins Zara and Kea were taken into hospital at just four weeks old with broncholitis.

While Zara recovered well with treatment, Kea became increasingly ill and was rushed into intensive care. I remember having to sign forms to say that we gave our permission for her to have blood transfusions. It was all such a shock. We had two healthy children already so why was everything going wrong?

My husband Mark was busy trying to keep our eight year old and two year old girls happy. Believe me it's so difficult to explain to children why your mum suddenly isn't at home and why your new baby sisters aren't well.

I was still breastfeeding and although Zara was doing well, I still needed to be close to Kea in those first few weeks of her life. Unfortunately Zara wasn't allowed onto Kea's ward which made things really complicated.

We were at breaking point when the nurses on the ward suggested Eckersley House might be able to help.

Although we were from Leeds they thought our situation was serious enough to be put forward to stay there.

It was a god send for us as a family. It meant that Mark could sit on the ward with Kea while I went to Eckersley to breastfeed Zara. It also meant that we could be together as a family and be with our other two children for the first time in 12 days.

Eckersley really was a home from home. It meant that we could have some privacy as a family away from the wards and that we could be strong for Kea, who was still really poorly at that point.

Eckersley even had the older girls' favourite computer games and toys which meant they were happy too. It really took away the added worry of going to and from home, away from our daughter Kea.

We also met other families who were going through similar or worse traumas than us and it really is at times like that you realise how lucky you are.

Kea and Zara are 17 weeks old now and my husband Mark is even doing a skydive for The Sick Children's Trust to raise some funds. I can't describe what a huge help Eckersley House was to us at such a hard time for our family.

Vanessa Jerome, Kea's mum