

It was a quiet Autumn Sunday morning, our two daughters aged 8 and 10 had planned to spend the afternoon washing cars and selling lemonade for pocket money, but before they could get on with their scheme they were having their regular fortnightly riding lesson.

I was waiting for them to finish the lesson when the riding instructor came rushing up to tell me there had been an accident. It was at that moment that our lives were pitched into turmoil.

Our youngest daughter, Hannah, had been thrown from a horse and hit her head on the arena fence, when I got to her she was on the ground bleeding, unconscious and clearly very badly injured. Her sister Tilly was trying to comfort her but very frightened and distressed. Ambulances, Paramedics and MedStar doctors arrived and quickly took over, they worked on Hannah for a long time, trying to get her stable enough to drive to the W&C hospital. All the while Sam, Tilly and I watched on in silence, terrified.

On arrival at the W&C Hannah was rushed into A&E, I have very blurry memories of standing outside the doors watching through the windows this team of incredible doctors and nurses rushing to save our daughters life. At some point I was taken upstairs and we were told that Hannah was very ill indeed and was moved into PICU.

Over the next three weeks our lives were consumed by watching machines track our daughters brain activity, Hannah had been put in an induced coma in order to let her brain injury start to heal. The doctors, neurosurgeons and nurses were a constant presence, all of this amazing human skill and kindness was focussed on keeping our young daughter alive.

Finally after 3 weeks of PICU, scans, drugs, a tracheostomy and endless dedicated care, Hannah was deemed well enough to be moved from PICU to the Kate Hill Ward. Once she was on the ward another team of experts came in to start making her not just alive but well again. She started play therapy with the wonderful Linda, and an amazing team of nurses cared for her so beautifully. The nurses became friends who Hannah really looked forward to spending time with. Hannah played endless games of Uno and Connect 4 with all the medical team, they all worked so hard and encouraged Hannah to keep going during really tough days when she was learning to speak, eat and walk again.

Eight weeks after Hannah's injury the next step was to get her to come home, the Rehab Team were now in charge of her care and the team made a home visit to get us set up properly to look after our daughter. She arrived home with a wheelchair and many other aids which were provided so Hannah could safely be at home. Hannah spent a further 2 months visiting the W&CH daily as part of her rehabilitation. Under their expert and compassionate care Hannah progressed from being unable to walk to riding a bike around the hospital corridors, she needed a speech therapist, an OT, a team of physios and support workers - the dedication, love and kindness from this team and all the staff at the W&CH to Hannah but also to our whole family was amazing and something which we will always be grateful for.

Two years on from Hannah's accident we have our lovely, infuriating, funny, loud and energetic daughter back. We will always be indebted to the staff of the W&C Hospital from the A&E department, the PICU staff, the ward doctors and nurses, the MRI scanning team, the Neurological team, the ENT theatre staff, the psychologists, the social workers the physios, OTs, therapists the list is endless. We are so enormously lucky to have this huge team of compassionate, caring, tireless, skilled experts as without them we would have lost our daughter.



*Becky Jeffries
Hannah's Mum*