

# Dominic's Story

On Sunday 8 June, our son Dominic Jack Greenbank - then 10 months old - was admitted to the Chelsea and Westminster hospital suffering with breathing difficulties. We were concerned enough about Dominic's breathing to take him to hospital, but hoped it would be a one-night stay for observation and medication.



My wife Susannah stayed with Dominic overnight at the Chelsea and Westminster, and I returned home to pack a bag with a change of clothing. Early next morning, on returning to Dominic's room, I found an empty bed. A nurse told me that things had not gone well during the night. I was taken to an emergency room where I found Dominic surrounded by a team working on him in a full-scale emergency.

The anaesthetist, Dr Mark Bloch, intubated Dominic and within an hour our baby son was on a life support machine. The team at the Chelsea and Westminster arranged for Dominic to be transferred to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at St Mary's, Paddington. Dr Bloch told us that St Mary's PICU is a centre of excellence for paediatric care and that their retrieval team is one of the best in the country - also supporting and training other retrieval teams. The transfer was a meticulous changeover operation taking nearly four hours. Dominic was now on a mobile life support machine and ready for an ambulance ride to St Mary's.

On admission to St Mary's, Dominic was described as having severe respiratory distress with wheeze. He required ventilation with high pressures and there was hyperinflation with a right middle lobe collapse on the initial chest X-rays.

We arrived at PICU and were taken to see Dominic, who was attached to and surrounded by a bewildering array of machinery and monitors with tubes and drips in his little body. This, of course, was every parent's worst nightmare realised.

The team at PICU were extremely supportive and answered all our questions in attentive detail.

It was on the second day that I began to notice that all the babies on PICU were receiving the kind of loving care that a parent would give: a kind word, a touch or playing music to the babies seem like small things, but to a Mum or Dad they are extremely comforting. However, there was no getting away from the fact that our baby son was in a critical condition and had a long way to go for a full recovery. Dominic had some complications and was fighting against the ventilator.

Eventually, on the fifth day in PICU and under the excellent care of Dr Claudine De Munter and the PICU team, Dominic was extubated and started breathing on his own again.

The nursing staff, doctors and consultants in PICU gave our son skilful, loving and dignified care, for which we are extremely grateful.

Dominic has made a full recovery and is his usual happy smiling self again. He loves to have his favourite books read to him and gets extremely excited at the sight of a double-decker bus!

*Peter Greenbank*