

FINNBARS FORCE

A New Hope in the Fight Against Childhood Brain Tumours

Our Story

Our wonderful little boy Finnbar was born on 10th September 2010 and enjoyed a lovely start to life, doing all the things little boys love doing and being around his loving family. He was doing really well at school and was a fantastic reader - he absolutely loved stories and always had at least two every bedtime.

In November 2015, a couple of months after his 5th birthday, he started to suffer from occasional dizzy spells, which were initially put down to an ear infection. We became concerned after the dizziness was getting no better after a few weeks and noticed that he seemed to be developing other subtle symptoms.

By January 2016 we were very worried and got him referred to the NNUH. A brain scan revealed abnormalities in his cerebellum, but we were relieved to be told that it may not be the worst case - a tumour - at all, and even if it was, it would be low grade (slow growing and not very aggressive).

After several weeks of observation under Addenbrookes hospital, Finnbar continued to deteriorate and he underwent emergency brain surgery to relieve high pressure. During the same hospital stay a biopsy was taken.

In early March, our worst fears were confirmed and he was diagnosed with a Grade 2 Astrocytoma (very rare in young children). He began chemotherapy soon after. Finnbar was incredibly brave throughout his illness and treatment, being subject to many terrifying MRI scans, needles and tablets, as well as spending many nights in hospital. He never complained and tried his hardest to be his usual happy self. However, instead of improving during the course of his treatment, he seemed to worsen.

In May 2016, after another long hospital stay and further tests, we were told that the initial diagnosis was probably incorrect and that the tumour was a much more aggressive type. We were given the heartbreaking news that the doctors felt that there was nothing that could be done to save, or even help, our dear little Finn. We refused to give up so easily and neither would Finnbar, despite being desperately poorly. We obtained a second opinion from GOSH and managed to push for radiotherapy to be commenced urgently to keep him alive. We were warned many, many times that Finnbar wouldn't make another night, but he kept fighting and got through the radiotherapy.

We left Addenbrookes after 4 weeks and spent a week at Quidenham (EACH) Hospice, who were wonderful to us. He seemed so settled and was even showing a few signs of improvement neurologically. We took him home in early July and did as much as we could fit in with him over the next few weeks, even managing to get him out and about in a new car we were able to buy after the wonderful fundraising efforts of our friends, family and amazing local community.

Sadly however, some of the essential medications that he was taking had some very nasty side effects which caused some serious complications. On Friday 5th August, despite having had several good days beforehand, Finnbar became very poorly and that evening we cuddled him as he slipped away from us.

The way that people came together to support us through the horrendous journey we faced was absolutely inspirational. The way that Finnbar fought with all his might against the death sentence he was given was equally incredible. The year that passed, during which our lives completely stopped, and the time since has been unbearable. But these things combined have left us determined to see something good happen in Finnbar's name and memory. **Finnbar's Force** is the light that will shine through incredibly dark times. We hope that we can use his force to make things better for other families that find themselves going through similar, heart-breaking situations, and ultimately to bring about an end to the evil of childhood brain tumours.





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Our Aims

We want to reduce suffering for children who receive the devastating diagnosis of a brain tumour. Our three main aims will be:

1) To support children suffering from brain tumours (especially rare/unusual presentations) and their families, through;

-information and advocacy, including possible funding of a specialist nurse advocate role

-local support groups

-facilitating better access to existing services and pushing for improvement of services where necessary

-basic financial support (e.g. hospital associated costs, car parking, food, emergency accommodation etc)

2) To support and fund research into brain cancer and potential treatments through grants to research teams and support of umbrella organisations, such as Brain Tumour Research

3) To raise awareness of the disease and its debilitating effects and to campaign for improvements in the current standard of care and support available, as well as for more research/funding for research

Fundraising—Where we are right now

So far we have had phenomenal support from our families, friends and our local community. Since Finnbar passed away in August last year, we have received over £12000 in donations, mainly from sponsored events.

We would very much like to keep us this fantastic level of fundraising, and have had many people come to us with great ideas. We are working on ways to make donating as easy as possible. Currently the only ways are; to support one of the many events that are happening, or through cash or cheque donations, or via direct bank transfer. We hope to have a dedicated donations page set up soon however, for casual donations, and a charity bank account to enable cheques to be written directly to 'Finnbar's Force'. We have just received our charity commission registration and as such we are in the process of making these things happen—this will also mean that we can benefit from gift aid on our donations.

In the meantime, to donate please contact Tristan Cork on 07508 548517 to discuss the best option.

Our website is currently under construction and we hope to be live by mid-march. Our facebook page and twitter feeds currently carry information about upcoming and ongoing fundraising events and opportunities.

Thank you for supporting Finnbar's Force,

Tristan & Claire Cork