

OPEN LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM DR SARAH JARVIS (for publication)

Dear Editor,

I would like ask your readers for help with a new charity campaign called '**Better at Home**' which is being run by national children's charity **WellChild** along with the **Royal College of Nursing**.

The idea for this campaign came when WellChild started talking to families whose children were staying in hospital Intensive Care and High Care Units for long periods of time. In many, many cases it was felt that they could have been receiving the care they needed at home - with the right kind of community support - and that's when work on Better at Home began in earnest.

The research currently being undertaken by the Better at Home team is designed to help make sure these children, and future generations, can be with their families and be cared for at home.

Whilst the team is talking to children's hospitals up and down the country to understand how many children are affected and what steps can be taken to help them get home, a really important part of this story is the experiences of children and families in these situations.

We would love to hear from any family willing to share with us their story of having a child with long-term, complex health problems who is currently, or was once, in hospital for months or even years. We want to hear about the additional emotional, practical and financial burdens that this can bring.

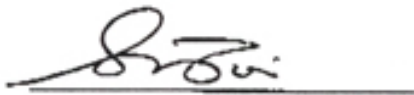
The stories which come from your readers could be the catalyst for change.

As a GP I hear heart-rending stories of families who suffer (both emotionally and financially) whilst traipsing to and from hospital to visit a sick child, particularly when they have other children at home, and at a time when they have more than enough to cope with!

Above all that, I am a mother who has experienced the joy of bringing a very ill child home from hospital and, on behalf of all the children longing to go home right now, I want to thank you in advance for your help.

You can call **0808 801 0330** and speak in confidence to one of the nurses working on WellChild's free **Helpline**, or email your story to campaign@wellchild.org.uk. If you would like to keep up to date with developments on **Better at Home** then please visit www.wellchild.org.uk

Many thanks again for your help



Dr Sarah Jarvis MA, BM BCh, DRCOG, FRCGP

Dr Jarvis is GP and GP trainer in inner-city London, a regular contributor to *Good Housekeeping*, *Women's Health*, *Pregnancy and Baby*, and *You* magazines. She is well known for her work on *The One Show*, the ITN lunchtime news and BBC Radio 2.