

## **BOOST FOR TEES VALLEY CHARITY AS THE O'BOYLES GENEROUSLY DONATE CEO INSPIRATION AWARD TO HELP FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM**



*David with his wife Melissa and children Jake, 5, and Ellie, 12*

A Tees Valley charity helping families of children with autism is set to benefit from the generosity of a Sembcorp employee.

David O'Boyle has chosen to donate the £1,100 he received through the CEO Inspiration Award towards the special educational needs of his 5-year-old son to the popular Daisy Chain charity at Norton, near Middlesbrough.

David, an IT Infrastructure Engineer and his wife Melissa were “over the moon” to receive the confidential sum following a successful application for the special award in January.

But the big-hearted couple had absolutely no hesitation in donating it to Daisy Chain where their son Jake has spent many happy hours over the last six months. Their gesture will now spread the benefit to more families with the same issues in the Tees Valley area.

Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in August last year following a long assessment process, Jake was also found to have a sensory processing disorder and hypermobility and he is currently under investigation to determine if he is epileptic.

David said: “At just 18 months we noticed something was different and that Jake appeared different to children of a similar age. We started a long process of trying to understand what appeared to be affecting him and spoke to numerous medical professionals.”

The couple continue to fight for their fun-loving little boy’s needs and to ensure he has a happy future and reaches his full potential. However, as he struggles with many tasks that most five-year-olds would take for granted, they have found that the support of Daisy Chain has been essential in his development. Even so, Jake is still able to attend mainstream school and the O’Boyle family has a good support network.

David explained why Daisy Chain has been so special to the family.

“We found a huge void of support after diagnosis from medical professionals and without the support of charities like Daisy Chain, who specialise in working with children with ASD, we would be in a much worse position.

“Jake loves it there because he can relax and enjoy the soft play and animals without the stress of a routine soft play environment.

Daisy Chain relies entirely on charitable donations and the CEO award will help to continue this support.

Daisy Chain <https://www.daisychainproject.co.uk/> was established as a charity in 2003 – the same year as Sembcorp established a presence in the UK.

It was the dream of the late Lesley Hanson, whose son Jacob was also diagnosed with autism at an early age.

Lesley and her husband Duane became aware of the problems faced by parents and carers of children on the higher end of the autistic spectrum and began to raise money for a haven where children could go to experience pleasure tailored specifically to their needs and a place where parents, carers and siblings could also receive support and information.

The charity has since gone from strength to strength and now offers a wide range of support services to children and adults affected by autism, either those with a diagnosis or who are undergoing the diagnostic process, their parents/carers and their siblings.

More than 2,000 families of children and adults with autism throughout the area currently benefit from Daisy Chain's services and more than 500 children regularly take part in activities at the facility.



***David and Jake hand over the cheque at Daisy Chain's premises at Norton near Stockton.***