

CASE STUDY: DIY SOS TV DONATION

Abacus Healthcare donates specialist Gemini bath to DIY SOS star Matthew so he can return home



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Gemini in use

- Project:** DIY SOS Big Build donation
- Location:** Telford, Shropshire
- Solution:** Gemini height-adjustable bath with integrated platform
- Bather condition:** Reduced mobility following brain surgery and Stroke

Abacus Healthcare, a leading provider of power assisted baths for disabled bathers, has donated a Gemini bath to Matthew Cooper aged 12, as part of his family's DIY SOS TV programme home conversion in Trench, Telford.

Matthew was a typical active boy and Doctor Who fan aged 10 when he began to experience headaches and nausea which led to the diagnosis of a brain tumour. Following surgery, he was given a positive prognosis however Matthew's blood pressure became unstable and resulted in two significant Strokes and extensive paralysis. Supported by his parents Sue and Leigh, Matthew spent 18 months in Birmingham Children's

Hospital undergoing treatment and chemotherapy to stabilise his condition. Matthew was eventually discharged however he had to move into rented accommodation as the family's house was totally inaccessible and impractical for his care needs. Hence the Coopers began raising funds for the extensive building work required so Matthew could return home.



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Matthew's carer Ashleigh raises the Gemini bath



Sue demonstrating the detachable postural support



Nick Knowles directs the final stage of DIY SOS filming



With the help of Matthew's school, Wrockwardine Wood Junior School, they managed to raise £52,000 and were on the brink of commissioning work when DIY SOS contacted them. DIY SOS 'The Big Build' is the popular TV programme hosted by Nick Knowles that provides extensive home conversions for families in need. Matthew's headmistress had written to the programme's production company seeking help so the funds already collected could be retained for Matthew's ongoing care and rehabilitation. Following assessment of the family's situation, DIY SOS agreed to deliver the project.

This 'DIY SOS Big Build' was one of the largest ever attempted by the TV programme. It involved the complete remodelling of the house to include a fully accessible ground floor, driveway and garden so seamless wheelchair and hoist transfers could be achieved. A new single storey extension was constructed at the rear of the house for an adapted bedroom and specialist ensuite bathroom with direct access to the redesigned garden.

Abacus worked closely with DIY SOS to ensure a Gemini bath was suitable for Matthew's needs. A site survey was completed by Abacus and all the necessary pre-installation information was supplied so the bathroom could be planned appropriately. During the build, Abacus were able to efficiently install the Gemini at very short notice so the challenging project deadline was not compromised.

Following nine days of intensive construction and extensive remodelling of the Cooper's home, the family were invited back for the 'reveal day' which was attended by David Bertorelli and Brett Smith from Abacus. David and Brett were thanked by the Cooper family for the generous Abacus donation which helped Matthew return home.

Despite needing specialist care 24/7 Matthew remains positive and is now able to enjoy being at home with his family. His parents and carers are able to move

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Matthew freely around the ground floor as the layout is open plan and spacious. There is a ceiling track hoist connecting Matthew’s bedroom with his en-suite accessible bathroom so he can be transferred from bed to bath without interruption.

The variable height Gemini bath provides advanced support for Matthew and his carers as it encompasses an integrated changing, drying and bathing platform. When it is bath-time Matthew is lowered onto the platform and a detachable postural support. The Gemini containing temperature controlled water is then gently raised. Once Matthew is relaxed in the water, the bath and platform are lifted further so his parents and carers can wash him without the need to bend or stoop.

This process ensures several awkward transfers are eliminated and Matthew’s carers can avoid manual lifting and potential back injury. Matthew also benefits from remaining warmer and comfortable for longer as the changing and drying process is much quicker.

Abacus’ donation of a Gemini bath is providing significant benefits to Matthew and his family. His mother Sue comments: “Matthew has always loved a bath. When he was in the TCT ward it wasn’t easy for



Matthew’s Doctor Who themed bathroom door

him to have a bath as he either had to be transferred to the other side of the hospital or visit Acorns Children’s Hospice. At the Hospice they had a height adjustable bath and I really hoped for one when our house was converted by DIY SOS. I asked the production team for a specialist bath but never imagined we would own one. On the reveal day it was amazing to see the Gemini but not as amazing as seeing Matt’s face for the first time when he had a bath. Well, his face lit up like he was in ecstasy, he just lay there with his eyes shut and the

VARIABLE HEIGHT GEMINI BATH

A versatile 3-in-1 bathing solution for bathing, drying and changing – all in one easy transfer.

For bathers needing specialist care, the Gemini bath is a fully height adjustable bath that comes with an integrated variable-height platform to assist with bathing, drying and changing.

Bathers sit on the platform and the bath is then raised, gently immersing them in a relaxing bath. The bath and the bather can then be raised to a comfortable working height for the carer. After bathing, the platform becomes a drying and changing table, avoiding a wet transfer out of the bath.

The Gemini provides:

- Powered height adjustment with a variable height bathing, drying and changing platform
- Compact bath footprint
- Compatibility with a wide range of postural supports
- Range of taps, shower units, Chromotherapy lighting, Air Spa and Sound options
- 150kg safe lifting weight



Left: Abacus’ David Bertorelli (right) and his company Mascot Trevor the Turtle with Billy Byrne from DIY SOS

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biggest smile on his face. Matthew's left side is stronger than his right side however when he is in the bath he can kick his right leg which he enjoys. As well as Doctor Who, Matt is a big Thunderbirds fan so we hum the theme tune when his bath is going up and down, like he is Virgil Tracy!"

Sue continues: "Abacus and their representative David Bertorelli have been fantastic. David has given my carers and I training on how to use the bath and has put me in touch with so many useful people. Now we've used the Gemini many times, I understand how much safer it is than showering in my opinion, especially as Matt has a tracheotomy which needs to be kept clear of water. With the ceiling rail hoist and sling I can easily move Matt from his 'Tardis themed' bedroom to the bath without any manual lifting. One day recently he seemed to be going to sleep in the bath as he was so relaxed, we had to gently wake him up!"

Cecelia, one of Matthew's carers added: "Matthew is lovely to work with, he is the most patient and tolerant child I have ever met. He loves having a bath and for me, the Gemini is an absolute joy to use. I have another client who I have to hoist into a standard bath everyday which is really affecting my back. I have no back ache when bathing Matthew as I just lift the Gemini up without the need to bend. I know that Matthew is safe when in the bath and I feel

“ Matthew loves having a bath and for me as his carer, the Gemini is an absolute joy to use. ”

reassured he is comfortable especially as the postural support stops him sliding down."

Sue concludes: "Nick, Jules, Billy and the rest of the DIY SOS team were so supportive and really nice. It was unbelievable how many tradespeople came to help, I know on the reveal day, I was so overwhelmed I just didn't know how to say thank you. Words just didn't seem enough for this life-changing gift. My family can now move forward together as we have always done and the house lets us remain as one. Throughout Matthew's ongoing treatment and rehabilitation he always has a determined and accepting attitude, whatever his condition, he will make the best of it. His recent targeted physio is starting to make a difference and I'm sure the Gemini bath is helping with this programme. He is always more relaxed after a bath and we see more smiles."

Below: Brett Smith (left) and David Bertorelli (right) from Abacus Healthcare present Leigh with a cuddly Trevor the Turtle for his son



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To arrange a free Gemini demonstration, contact Abacus Healthcare on:

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