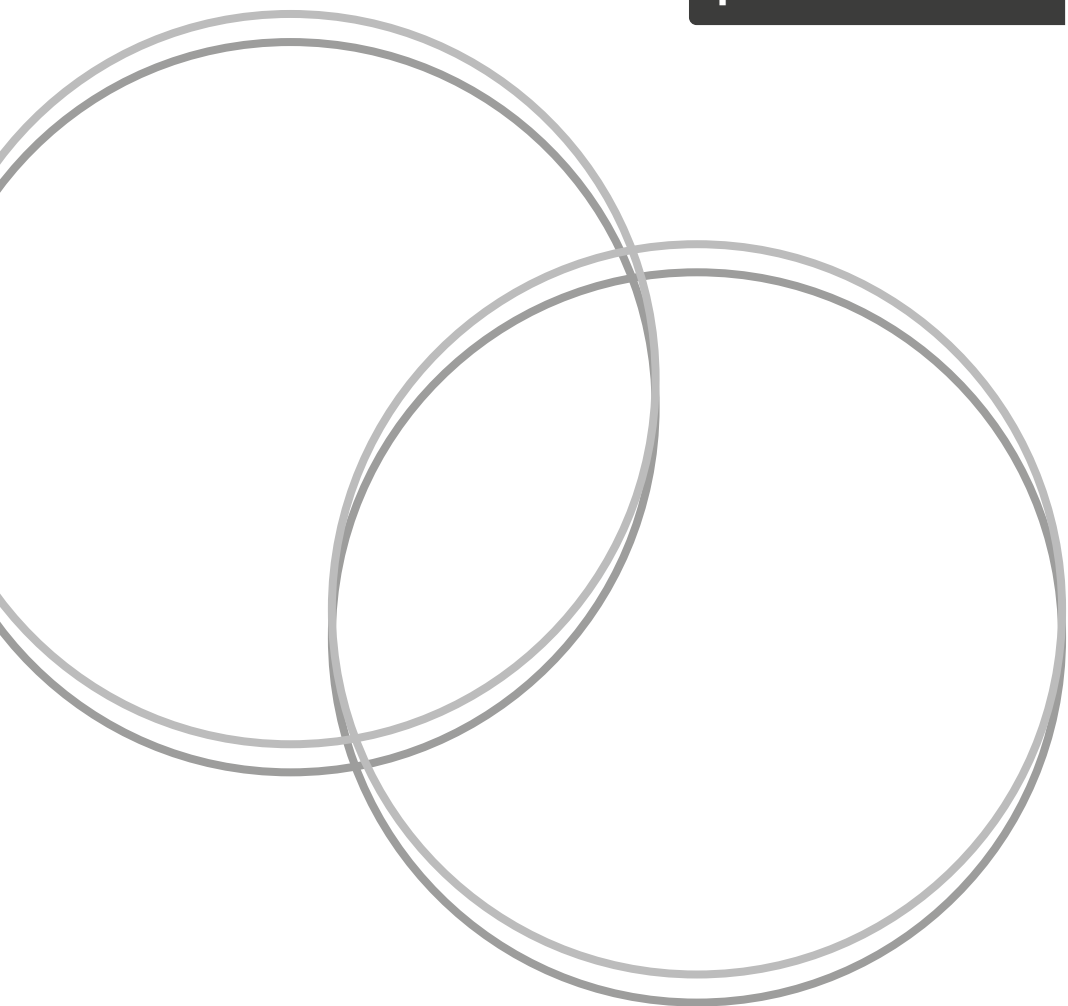




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Children's Play in Hospital

**Information for
parents and carers**



The Children's Hospital

What is a Health Play Specialist?

Health Play Specialists are qualified and registered healthcare professionals who form part of the multi-disciplinary medical, social and community team. They provide both in-patient and out-patient support to those receiving medical care and treatment within a Children's ward/hospital, hospice or other community based setting.

Health Play Specialists use play – alongside their knowledge and understanding of child development – as a tool to provide normalising and therapeutic play interventions. These help children and young people to feel safe and in control and to cope with any fear, pain or anxiety they may experience during their medical care and treatment. They are trained in using play for preparation, distraction and in post-procedural play techniques to help children and young people better understand their experiences.

About the team

At Oxford University Hospitals there is a specialised play department, consisting of qualified and registered Health Play Specialists (registered under HPSET the Health Play Specialist Education Trust) and Health Play Assistants.

Members of the hospital Play Team are based on each inpatient child and adolescent ward as well as within the Outpatient, Clinical Decisions Unit, A&E, ENT, Eye Hospital and Community Paediatric departments. The Play Team is also on hand to provide support, advice and guidance to other areas of the Trust where children and young people may be seen.

Health Play Specialists are available daily Monday to Friday and can be contacted by ward staff via the bleep system if needed.

Why is play in the hospital setting important?

Play is widely accepted as a natural and essential part of childhood, vital for healthy growth and development, enabling children to explore and make sense of the world around them.

Within a healthcare setting access to play continues to be all of these things whilst also providing so many additional benefits and functions.

- Play builds and establishes a relationship and trust between patient and healthcare professional and can break down barriers.
- Play is an outlet, it provides children and young people with a means to communicate and safely express themselves and their feelings.
- Play enables the child or young person to have a greater sense of control.
- It is fun and familiar; play can relieve boredom and help reduce anxiety, levels of pain and fear of hospital, treatments and procedures thus lessening the impact of hospital admission.
- Play can speed up recovery: Research shows that play can improve a child or young person's recovery time – believed to be due to the positive effect that being able to do something you want to do and enjoy can have on your ability to cope with stress and heal.
- Through play children and young people can learn about and experiment with the unfamiliar things around them, helping them to better understand, be prepared for and cope with their hospital admission, treatment and procedures.
- Play facilitates decision making and helps individuals find their own coping strategies.

Play opportunities at oxford university hospital

- Each inpatient ward has an indoor play area and many also have access to outside play spaces.
- Play is also encouraged at the bedside and the Health Play Specialist is on hand to support the facilitation of this.
- Play facilities in Children's waiting areas.
- Sensory Room (with specific access).
- Sensory Garden (with specific access).
- The Hospital Play Team at Oxford Children's Hospital are also very lucky to receive weekly Music Therapy and aromatherapy and massage Therapy support from Rosie's Rainbow Fund.
- Monthly visits from POD children's charity.

How does a health play specialist provide play in the hospital?

- Plan, organise and provide daily play services in the ward or department play areas or at the bedside.
- Contribute to clinical and Multi-Disciplinary Team judgements through observation, assessment and documentation.
- Facilitate free play, group activities and individual play sessions; provide stimulating, fun, creative and interesting recreational activities. Encourage the child or young person to engage in activities which may promote their health and recovery.
- To create a reassuring, welcoming and non-threatening environment.

- Identify, through assessment a child or young person's play and recreational needs during their hospital admission and provide play that meets these individual needs and interests.
- Advocate for children and young people.
- Provide the opportunity for the child or young person to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions through play, encouraging decision making, choices and independence.
- Promote and provide the opportunity for normal child development to continue.
- Complete developmental assessments and create collaborative play plans; using play to achieve developmental goals, regain skills lost through the effects of illness, treatment and hospitalisation and to cope with further hospital admissions, treatments and procedures.
- Support the child or young person and their family through therapeutic play interventions – preparation, distraction and post-procedural play – using age and developmentally appropriate techniques in which they are trained.
- Support the child or young person to recognise their own existing and to form new coping strategies which will enable them to cope with current and future hospital admission, treatments and procedures.
- Provide support for siblings.
- Provide advice and support for parents and carers.

Types of therapeutic play and their purpose

Diagnostic Play

Helps the Health Play Specialist assess and understand the child or young person's (and their families) understanding, knowledge, worries and fears in relation to their illness, hospital admission and treatment. It can also be used as a means to help the doctor and other medical professionals assess the child or young person.

Preparation Play

Preparation ahead of admission, treatment or a procedure is an important part of a child or young person's hospital journey. The Health Play Specialist uses preparation play as a means for information sharing, an opportunity for myth-busting and to facilitate an age and developmentally appropriate level of understanding. It creates and gives the opportunity to talk through the processes of what will happen and how, what things will look like and how things may feel. It also allows for choices to be made (who's lap to sit on, which distraction tool to use, among many others), questions to be asked and for the child or young person's voice and wishes to be heard. The Health Play Specialist will support the child or young person to recognise their own existing coping strategies and to form new or different ones.

There are lots of different and specifically designed tools that a Health Play Specialist may use to support the preparation process, these include (not solely) medically adapted dolls and figures, role play, 'real-life' models of equipment, picture books, social stories and purposefully designed online apps.

Preparation play may be delivered ahead of admission through a pre-assessment clinic or during admission.

Distraction

The Health Play Specialist is trained to provide therapeutic distraction, relaxation and desensitisation techniques – most commonly utilised during medical procedures, interventions and treatments, this is a method of play which provides the child or young person with an alternative positive focus point and can enable the child to feel more in control, supporting adherence and compliance to successfully complete a procedure or treatment.

The technique of distraction used depends on the child or young person's age and stage of development, their particular needs and wishes and the procedure or treatment they are going to have.

Health Play Specialists use a wide variety of different resources and techniques during distraction play. Some of which include; look and find books, bubbles, iPads/tablets, music, noisy toys, stories, guided imagery, focused breathing and other methods of relieving tension and relaxation techniques.

Post procedural play

Gives an opportunity for debrief. Following hospital admission, undergoing treatment or medical procedures it is important that children and young people have the opportunity to discuss what they have experienced and to express themselves freely. Discussing how they found a procedure or treatment in a safe environment helps patients work through fears or concerns; support their understanding of why things happened the way that they did and can enable them to form ways of coping for possible future treatments and procedures. Health Play Specialists offer these opportunities through a variety of play techniques.

Bereavement play and support

Health Play Specialists support the child or young person using a range of techniques to express their fears, emotions and feelings relating to end of treatment. Support and advice is provided to parents/carers and sibling groups. Activities may include memory boxes, hand and food prints, creative and expressive arts, messy play, storytelling and role play.

Sibling play support

A hospital admission affects the whole family and sibling group, Sibling support play provides the siblings of patients the opportunity to feel involved in the hospital journey and gives them a chance to ask questions and express their own feelings.

Contact details

Play Specialist Team

Telephone: 01865 231 249

Please leave a message on the answerphone.

Email: oxfordplayservices@ouh.nhs.uk

Further information

National Association of Hospital Play Staff

Website: www.nahps.org

For information on the importance of play in hospital and role of the play specialist.

Hospital Play Staff Education Trust

Website: www.hpset.org.uk

The registered body for Hospital Play Staff. Information on Health Play Specialist role and professional standards.

Action for Sick Children

Website: www.actionforsickchildren.org

A children's healthcare charity, specially formed to ensure sick children always receive the highest standard of care possible.

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

