



Evelina
London

Therapeutic and specialised play service

A guide to the service



showing
we **Care**

Evelina London Children's Hospital has a team of health play specialists who provide normalising and therapeutic play for children and young people who are inpatients or outpatients in our hospital. Our specialised play service caters for children and young people of all ages.

Why have play in hospital?

Play is an essential part of childhood.

Children and young people learn, develop, communicate, and can express themselves through play.

Allowing children and young people to play while in hospital provides them with the means to continue their normal development through fun familiar activities, and so helps their recovery and reduces anxiety.

Play helps children and young people understand and cope with their hospital admission, treatment and procedures better.

Playing freely, or directing individual play sessions, allows them to feel more in control, find their own coping strategies and helps their decision-making skills.

Play is a reminder of home. It gives the opportunity to talk about home life, which is helpful during long-term treatment.

Play can involve everyone including parents and all members of the paediatric team.

It breaks down barriers and lessens the impact of the hospital admission. It provides a way for children and young people to safely express feelings of fear or anxiety and can also help to reduce levels of pain.

What do we do?

Each ward has a play area, which provides a range of age-appropriate toys, books and activities, game consoles and DVD players. The play specialists are available from Monday to Friday, in inpatient and outpatient areas, and can be contacted by ward staff.

We support children, young people and families, through therapeutic play sessions.

Using play, we prepare children and young people for procedures. This is to help them gain a better understanding of medical procedures and treatment, using age- and developmental-appropriate techniques.

To minimise fear and anxiety, we use distraction and strategic play to help a child cope with painful and invasive procedures.

The play specialists provide fun, non-threatening activities to encourage and support the child's or young person's normal development, which can also help in a child's recovery.

We provide daily routines, continuity, and confidence-building, for long-term patients, or those who require ongoing treatment or admissions.

The play specialists can support siblings of long-term patients, helping them to feel more involved, when the main focus may be on the child who is undergoing treatment.

We support teenagers and young people, often speaking up for them in difficult situations.

We provide therapeutic play and support for children who have additional needs.

How to refer a patient to us

Parents and carers: Speak to the medical team looking after your child's condition and they can make the referral. If you are already in contact with a member of the health play specialist team, contact them directly or see the Evelina London website for more details.

Useful sources of information

National Association of Hospital Play Staff

w: www.nahps.org

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

Hospital Play Staff Education Trust

w: www.hpset.org.uk

The registered body for Hospital Play Staff.

Action for Sick Children

w: www.actionforsickchildren.org

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

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about therapeutic play, please call the hospital switchboard, **t:** 020 7188 7188 and ask for the bleep desk. Ask for bleep and wait for a response. This will connect you to one of our team.

e: PlaySpecialists@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/play-specialists

For more leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm

e: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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