

*The* ROYAL MARSDEN  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Children's play service



**NHS**

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**Information for children, young  
people and their families**

Oak Centre for Children and Young People

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This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

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Thanks to supporters of The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, we raised £16 million to build the Oak Centre for Children and Young People. Opened in September 2011 by TRH The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, it is one of the largest comprehensive children and young people's cancer centres in Europe.

The Royal Marsden is a world leading cancer centre, pioneering new treatments that save lives. To find out more on how you can get involved please visit [royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

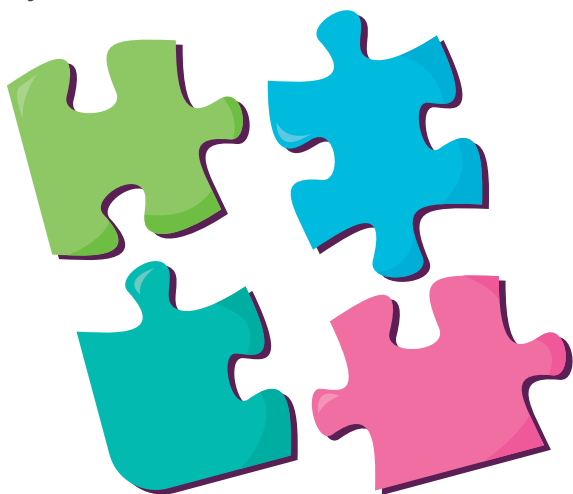
The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity  
**For a future beyond cancer**



# Play service

**T**he play service is available for patients and their siblings. It is made up of a team of Play Specialists and Assistants. They help children and young people have fun and use play as a form of therapy to enable them to cope with procedures, meeting developmental needs and aiding recovery. They organise parties, entertainers and events. We can provide play/activities in the playroom or at the bedside.

Play Specialists work with the multi-disciplinary team and can give explanations and information about types of cancer, treatment and symptoms which are appropriate to your child's development stage. Resources for coping with hair loss for children and young people are available. These include advice booklets, hats, bandanas, and storybooks.



## What do Play Specialists do?

- Organise daily play services, activities on the ward, at the bedside and in the playroom
- Provide play to achieve developmental goals
- Help children deal with fear and anxiety
- Use play to prepare children and teenagers for procedures, for example radiotherapy and transplant
- Help children cope with pain
- Help children regain skills lost through the effects of illness or hospitalisation
- Support families including siblings
- Contribute to clinical judgements through their observations
- Work with the multi-disciplinary team and document play sessions
- Advise parents, carers and staff on appropriate play for sick children.

## How play is used

Play helps children to learn coping strategies and express their feelings. The play service encourages children to explore a range of different types of play:

- Creative play, for example cutting, sticking and painting
- Imaginative/role play, for example Barbie house, dinosaurs, Happyland and dolls
- Sensory play, for example Play dough
- Physical play – there is a weekly soft-play session facilitated by the team. There is also an outdoor play garden with bikes and footballs
- Cognitive play, for example puzzles, Lego and shape sorters.

**Different types of play can be used in the following ways:**

Blowing bubbles, looking at books, counting, breathing techniques, guided imagery, or 3D distraction Vpod televisions, can be used as coping strategies for procedures such as accessing a Portacath or inserting a cannular.

Specially adapted medical dolls and age-appropriate information leaflets can also help to prepare children for the insertion of a Hickman Line, Portacath, Picc line or Nasogastric tube.

Sensory play using sand, water or play dough can allow children to express their feelings after a procedure.

Drawing or hospital Play Mobil can be another way for children to communicate their feelings.

The Bead of Courage programme allows children and young people to tell their story of their treatment through colourful beads. Each of the beads symbolises/represents a milestone such as chemotherapy, surgery and blood tests.



**In addition:**

For young people aged ten years and above, we have a room which allows them to have their own space.

The room contains various equipment such as gaming consoles, computers and music station.

For children with special/ additional needs we have sensory resources.

We work with the Youth Co-ordinator and provide pizza decorating, fruit kebab making and cake/biscuit decorating on a regular basis. We also provide other fun activities and crafts such as tie dye and decoupage.

During the summer months we have an outside play area, which we set up with various activities such as water play.

We have an outdoor cinema screening once a week during warmer months. There is also a music group and various sports sessions once a week.

Please ensure that all equipment is returned to the play room after use and not removed from the Children's Unit, so that we can continue to provide a high quality service.

We also have an end of treatment bell and you will get a bead of courage and an end of treatment certificate.







Radiotherapy and  
Chemotherapy Services  
F938021 & F938022

