York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Play in Hospital

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact

The Play Team on the Children's Ward

Tel: 01904 726017

Email: yhs-tr.PlayTeam@nhs.net

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Telephone: 01904 631313

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Play mission statement

The play team aims to promote a positive hospital experience for children, young people and their families. The play team are available to promote the physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people who are patients or visitors in hospital. This will be achieved through the provision of age and developmentally appropriate therapeutic and stimulating play within a safe environment.



'Play has the power to reduce fear, pain and trauma during treatment and recovery from illness – boosting mental and physical health and resilience.' – Starlight 2023.

Who are the play team?

The team is made up of qualified play assistants, early year's practitioners and play specialists.

Play Assistant – Qualified to a minimum of NVQ level 3 or above qualification with at least two years' experience of working with children and young people. Their background is predominantly play and education.

Early Years Practitioners (Play Leader) are qualified at level 3 and above with staff being educated from BTEC, NVQ, to foundation degree status all having more than two years' childcare experience in varying settings. Their background is from early years setting focused and play and recreation.

Healthcare Play Specialists are qualified early years practitioners who also have at least two years' experience of working with children and young people in hospital. They have undertaken further study (Foundation Degree in Healthcare Play Specialism) to register as a qualified healthcare play specialist. Their background is early years with a minimum of two years healthcare experience of working with children and young people in hospital and the community.

'For children who are sick and receiving care and treatment, play can make the difference between positive and negative experiences.' Pedal. 2025.

When is the play team available?

The play team are available Monday to Friday between 7am and 8pm.
Weekends and bank holidays between 7am and 3pm.
They are available on the ward, the assessment unit and the day unit. Hours in each area depend on the need for play staff.

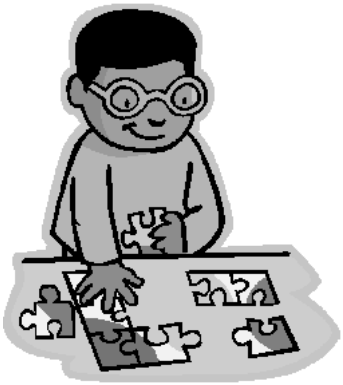
Where is the play team based?

The Play Team is based on the Children's Ward at York hospital but work in other areas within child health (day unit, child development centre and children's assessment unit).
Scarborough Hospital's Rainbow Ward have 2 members of the play team and have different working hours than York hospital. To contact the play team, please email: e.channings@nhs.net to discuss the role of the play team on Rainbow ward.



The role of play and recreation in hospital

- **Play and recreation** creates an environment where stress and anxieties are reduced.
- **Play and recreation** helps patients to regain confidence and self-esteem.
- **Play and recreation** provides an outlet for feelings of anger and frustration.
- **Play and recreation** helps patients understand their illness and the treatment for it. Through play, patients are able to process the information they need in preparation for hospital procedures and treatments.
- **Play and recreation** aids consent to assessments and understanding of diagnosis.
- **Play and recreation** speeds up the recovery and rehabilitation process.
- **Play and recreation** is fun and helps your child to take home positive experiences about their stay in hospital.



Role of the play specialist/leader

- To organise and provide play activities in areas where patients attend and by the bed sides.
- To maintain a patient friendly and welcoming environment that helps bridge the gap between home and hospital.
- Provide play and recreation to achieve and maintain developmental goals.
- Help children and young people overcome and cope with anxieties and other emotions.
- Use play and recreation to prepare and support children through hospital procedures.
- Support families and siblings.
- Contribute to clinical judgements through observations.
- Promote/teach the value of play and communication for the sick child and young person.
- To encourage peer group friendships to develop.
- Maintain high standards in health and safety for children.
- To keep updated in best practise with a view to improving services.

Facilities

Ward 17

Playroom open **9am – 7.00pm.**
Play equipment is around the room for children to play with. If there is nothing suitable, the play team can find other play resources that are, as they will be kept in cupboards for patient safety.

Sensory room - available always. The sensory room can be reserved for patients to use if they are immunosuppressed or compromised. It will be chlor cleaned prior to use. This room is available for patients on the children's assessment unit too. Additional information below.

The Cube is open **9am – 7.00pm.** The Cube is a play and recreation space for children over 8yrs.
Use is limited to children over 8 years old due to the play equipment being unsuitable for younger children and to give the older children and young people a place to separate themselves from their treatment.

Toys and activities can be brought to the bedside by the Play Team if your child is too unwell to venture to the play areas.
We have a range of toys/activities suitable from birth to 18 years.

Children's Assessment Unit

Playroom/ waiting room open 7.30am till late

This room is used as a waiting area and has limited toys available. If there is nothing suitable to the child's age or ability, please speak to a member of the play team who can provide something more appropriate.
Toys and play equipment can be taken to bedside if required. Please speak to a member of the play team.

Day Unit

Toys and activities are provided in a small play area/waiting area. Please ask a member of staff for additional play resources if required. There is a selection of sensory aids for children with additional sensory needs who may require some time of calm.

Child Development Centre

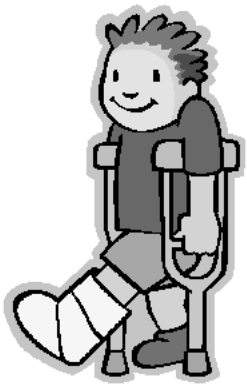
There is a waiting area with minimal toys and a sensory floor. Colouring activities of can be requested if not available.

All areas are cleaned thoroughly every morning.

School

‘Children have a right to properly planned education’, Citizens Advice (2015).

For school aged children who have been in hospital for over five days, the nurse in charge can contact their school to arrange for visits or work (if well enough) so that education and development is not hindered or delayed.



Sensory room

Sensory play can be beneficial to children of all ages and abilities as everyone needs to develop their senses (hearing, sight, smell, movement and touch) hand/eye coordination, language development, control over their environment and relaxation.

The sensory room is available to children of all ages and contains an air tube, music with USB, fibre optics, UV lighting, mirrors, musical toys, soft flooring and support aids, a light projector and a wall mounted fan.

Patients and parents are encouraged to use the sensory room as it allows for time together in a calming environment.
Patients who are bed bound or in wheelchairs can also use the sensory room. Speak to a member of the team to adapt to your needs.

The sensory room can help reduce anxiety and stress and can be used at any time of the day or night.

We ask that all patients are accompanied by an adult over the age of 18 due to health and safety guidelines.

Outdoor shoes must be removed and hand gel used before entering.

Use is limited to one family at a time and the sensory room is cleaned after each use.

Can I bring my own toys and games onto the ward?

Yes, you can!

Home comforts such as bears and blankets are encouraged to be brought into hospital for familiarity and comfort.

Toys and games can be brought into hospital but need to be appropriate to the environment.

The ward has plenty of toys/activities available for use. Any items from home must be kept to a minimal.

Limited games consoles, TVs and DVDs are available on the ward for use at the bedside.

Wifi is available – access is through signing into NHS WiFi. This takes you to the signing in page of the NHS BT open zone. All you need to do is click on ‘Get Online’.

Patients are encouraged to keep personal belongings safe, as York and Scarborough Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust cannot be held responsible or liable for theft or damage.

Further information

See our hospital guide for children and the meet the teams:

https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/home/

To read the new ‘Play well guidelines’ highlighting the importance of play in hospital, please read:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/play-well-guidelines-for-commissioning-and-designing-health-play-services/

References:

Pedal. March 2025. Playing with Children’s Health. University of Cambridge
URL: https://www.pedalhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/PEDAL-Playing-with-childrens-health.pdf (Accessed: 17th June 2025)

Starlight Children’s Foundation. 2023. Reducing Trauma for Children in Healthcare. Play in Hospital Report.
URL: https://www.pedalhub.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/PEDAL-Playing-with-childrens-health.pdf (Accessed: 17th June 2025).

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:
The Play Team or the Ward Sister, Children's Ward, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726017.
Email: yhs-tr.PlayTeam@nhs.net

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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