

CASE STUDY

Bringing Play to the Children's Ward at Raigmore Hospital

IDENTIFYING THE NEED

The Children's Ward at Raigmore General Hospital cares for young patients of all ages, many of whom spend long periods in hospital. While the ward already had an outdoor play area, the equipment was limited and very old, and there were few options to engage older children who were less interested in traditional toys. Families and staff highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for both physical play outdoors and age-appropriate entertainment indoors to support children's wellbeing during their stay.

One family, whose child is regularly admitted to the ward, recognised this need first-hand. Staying in a side room that overlooked the outdoor play area, the child decided to ask for donations instead of gifts for their birthday, raising £300 to improve the play space for all children on the ward.

THE CHALLENGE ON THE GROUND

Children staying in hospital can feel isolated, anxious, and bored, particularly when treatment keeps them away from school, friends, and normal routines. Limited outdoor equipment restricted opportunities for active play, while older children often struggled to find activities that matched their interests or kept them distracted while receiving treatment. Both children and parents expressed a hope for more resources to make their time on the ward easier and more engaging.

HOW WE RESPONDED

Thanks to the generosity of the birthday fundraiser, and additional support from the Charity, the ward was able to purchase:

- A wooden playhouse and mud kitchen for the outdoor play area
- Footballs, badminton gear, and other outdoor games
- A range of new Nintendo Switch games to keep older children engaged indoors

Together, these additions provided a balance of active, imaginative, and technology-based play to meet the needs of children of different ages and interests.



THE CHANGE WE ACHIEVED

- **For Patients:** The outdoor equipment gave younger children opportunities for imaginative and physical play, helping them to burn off energy and enjoy time outside during their hospital stay. Indoors, the updated Nintendo Switch games proved a huge success with older patients, providing distraction during procedures and helping them to connect with peers through multiplayer play. Parents shared how relieved they felt to see their children relaxed and happy despite difficult circumstances.
- **For Families:** Families expressed gratitude for the new play options, especially the type of technology on offer, which many did not expect the hospital to provide. Knowing their children had access to up-to-date and engaging activities brought comfort during what is often a stressful time.
- **For Staff:** Nurses reported that the equipment has made a noticeable difference to the ward environment.

“Of the new Nintendo games, Senior Play Specialist, Stephanie, said *“It helped to relax the children in our care and help to distract them whilst having procedures. Children interacted with each other which meant happier, relaxed patients which helped with staff morale.”*

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The success of this small project highlights the vital role that play, whether outdoors, through imaginative games, or via technology, plays in supporting children's health and wellbeing during hospital stays. We will continue to support the team to get the little extras

that make such a big difference to children and their families. These purchases were made possible thanks to the generosity of donors, particularly the young fundraiser and their family, whose gift has left a lasting legacy for children cared for on the ward.

