



Making hospital a happier place for children through play and advocacy

## Play Volunteers

CHI Hospital Play Volunteers volunteer in 13 hospitals across Ireland (attach list), and the experience can vary slightly from one hospital to the next. Play volunteers are in playrooms, at



## Here are what some of our volunteers say about their experience

We stop and have a chat, read them a story, tell them a joke. It's anything really to provide a bit of distraction. When a child is sick in hospital, providing entertainment is the last thing on a parent's mind so that's what we try and do. It gives them a way to express themselves and it's soothing and comforting for them. They are in an unfamiliar environment. They're unwell and they're finding it all very scary. The play calms them and hopefully we offer a supportive and caring presence.

– **Marion Ashley, Waterford**

We float between wards and different areas, depending on where the kids are. We don't work in teams of less than two. Crumlin has six playrooms and two people can man an entire playroom full of kids. We go bedside too. If the child can't get out of bed, we will go into them and do painting on their table and things like that. I always say that the hospital is full of smiles and cries. There are days I go in and have so much fun. There are other days you go home with tears in my eyes. I don't bring it all the way home. It's definitely worth it.

– **Luke O'Neill Volunteer Crumlin**

We go into the playroom and tidy up. We go to the beds in the wards and tell the parents we're down in the playroom if they'd like to come down. Lots of the parents are very grateful that they can have a break. Some mothers and fathers are with the child all day and need the break. You're doing something worthwhile.

– **Mary Mullery, Wexford**

CHI facilitates play for children who are in hospital. We also provide cover for parents who are staying with their children long-term to have a break, whether it be to get out for a cup of tea, a shower, or a walk. When families are in a hospital setting, the parents and children are out of their comfort zone. It's particularly hard for those who are far from home and the service we offer makes such a difference to them. We wear red t-shirts or tabards so we are easy to spot.

## Just Ask Desk Volunteers

We operate a JustAsk desk in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin.

In Ireland, approximately 270,000 children are treated in hospital each year and about 100,000 stay at least overnight or longer. Parents often travel long distances to hospital with their sick children. Perhaps exhausted from a long journey, or coping with an unfamiliar environment and away from the support of family, parents greatly appreciate a warm welcome and helping hand on arrival at the hospital.