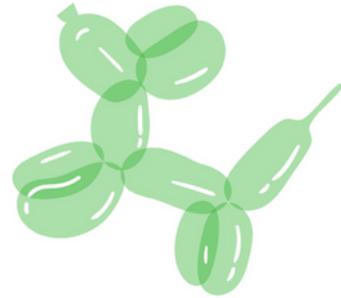




Theodora Children's Charity **2022 Impact Report**

Kristie's Story

At the beginning of the summer holidays, Kristie spent 10 days in the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in Brighton where she met the Giggle Doctors.



Tell us about you!

My name is Kristie and I am 9 years old!

What was your favourite thing about the Giggle Doctors?

My favourite things were that they made me a balloon animal, the bubble camera that made lots of bubbles everywhere and the hide and seek was really funny.

How did they make you feel?

They made me feel a lot happier and made me laugh a lot! Can you tell them they are the best part of hospital and they are the funniest people I have ever met.



"After everything she'd been through it was lovely to see her proper belly laughing with them and have a brief time totally forgetting the accident. Now the only thing she ever mentions about our 10-day stay in hospital was meeting the Giggle Doctors!"

Alyson, Kristie's Mum



4978 children visited by Giggle Doctors in person and through Virtual Visits and Giggle-a-Grams



100% of parents said meeting a Giggle Doctor improved their child's experience of hospital

"it breaks up the [hospital] stay and makes our family feel cared for"

Jodie, Parent



Over **75%** of parents said their child was more playful after meeting a Giggle Doctor

Giggle Doctor Perspective

Since 2001, Clare has been working as Dr Ding Dong. "I have always believed in the power of art and healing," she says, which meant being a Giggle Doctor was a role which immediately made sense to her.

She's experienced many wonderful connections with the young people she's encountered: "I saw one long-term oncology patient every week for a long time. She would barely say a word to me, but I'd always leave her with a sticker. Her mum said, "She talks about you every week as soon as you're gone, but when you're here she won't say a word." A few years later I ended up seeing her on the outside and she couldn't stop talking! She had lots of hair, and she was just so vibrant and well."



The connection between Giggle Doctor and child is crucial, but there's so much more to the work: "Our job isn't just about the children, it's about the staff - we make a difference to them. They love seeing children's reactions, and I also feel the families and caregivers need it desperately too! And that in turn affects the child, especially the younger ones. If they see their parents enjoying play with a Giggle Doctor, or even just having a conversation,



Image credit: Erica Dezzone

there's a sense of ease. If the parent, caregiver or sibling is happier and more relaxed that has a ripple effect which is crucial in the child's healing."

"Some parents/families/caregivers are pretty traumatised by going into hospital with their child and that doesn't just go away when they leave the hospital, it can continue. If I've been part of a healing experience for them, I hope that this will stay with them and help to ease the trauma - the memories and feelings of the laughter, of the relaxedness, of the conversation."

After many years in an emotionally taxing job, it might be tempting to leave the role behind, but for Clare, being Dr Ding Dong feels profoundly important: "The curiosity never stops - how I change as a person and as an artist over the years and how this informs my work in the hospital and my engagement with people."

"For me, the primary focus is the connection to myself and the connection to others, it's being present and part of the whole, of giving and receiving."



100% of parents experienced a positive benefit from meeting a Giggle Doctor

"If your child is happy and laughing then you are happy as a parent so I think the Giggle Doctors are probably as much of a source of joy for parents as they are for kids."
Jonathan Matthews, Teacher



"When I see the Giggle Doctors, I feel excited, happy and ready to have a good laugh. They always make my time at hospital very enjoyable. I'm 11 now and I don't think they'll ever stop making me laugh!"
Eleanor, aged 11



Eleanor, who is now severely visually impaired, has known the Giggle Doctors since she was 3 years old.

NHS Perspective

Sharon Charane is a Senior Health Play Specialist at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. She sent us this story about when Dr Geehee visited



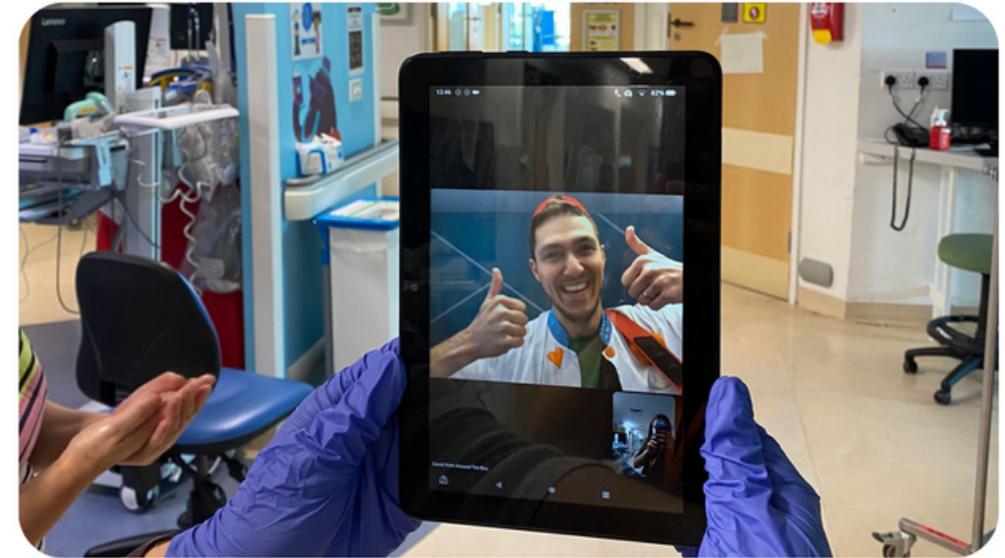
I have been working with a long-term patient for the past 4 years. She has a number of very serious health conditions, as well as special educational needs. Whilst on the high dependency unit, she found it very difficult to focus on one activity for long periods and became agitated quickly when she lost interest in the activity.

The day before Dr Geehee visited, the patient had been introduced to a simple hand fan. I shared this information with Dr Geehee, and during her visit with the patient she took over. She quickly formed a connection with the child using simple Attention Autism techniques and managed to hold her interest for a longer time.

Dr Geehee is one incredible Giggle doctor and has wide expertise in all areas of our hospital. She brings laughter onto all wards and engages with the medical team. She is a ray of sunshine in what can sometimes be a very frightening place for our sick children. The difference she makes to the mental well-being of all our patients who are lucky enough to spend time with her is invaluable.

The children are often traumatised and within a short time will find smiles for Dr Geehee. She is able to normalise medical areas and show the patients that doctors wearing a white coat doctors are not always frightening.

Digital Giggles



As well as continuing to bring personal Giggle Doctor visits via video call and pre-recorded 'Giggle-a-Gram' videos, we also explored a new way of bringing fun to sick children digitally.

During Play in Hospital Week, Dr Bungee zoomed into University College London Hospital (pictured above) to bring virtual giggles to children on the wards. UCLH Play specialist Kate told us resources for play were scarce in her department, but through this live Virtual Visit, we were able to bring a personalised Giggle Doctor encounter to several children on the ward.

You can find out more about booking a Virtual Visit or Giggle-a-Gram for an individual child on our website by clicking or clicking the link in the margin below. If you work in a hospital, hospice, or specialist care setting and would like to talk about arranging Giggle Doctor Virtual Visits for the children you work with drop our programme team a message via our website.



Donor Perspective

In 2022, Little Lives UK awarded us two grants totalling over £5000 to fund Giggle Doctor visits at the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in Brighton.

LITTLE LIVES UK
CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Little Lives UK is a children's charity which supports children around the UK. They were drawn to support Theodora Giggle Doctors because they saw how as the country came out of the depths of the pandemic, many children were isolated in hospital, unable to see their friends and families.

After seeing the difference their first grant had made, they generously provided an additional grant to the end of the year.

9-year-old Kristie (see pages 1&2) was one of the children visited by Giggle Doctors at the Royal Alexandra during the time Little Lives UK supported our work. When we shared her story with Tom, from Little Lives UK, he said:

"That just means the world to us and that's exactly why we like supporting people like yourselves who can do such good work."



"What really caught our eye was that you guys go in and become part of their family. You give them something fun, you give them something to look forward to when they're in quite hard situations.
Thank you very much for the amazing work you are doing."

Tom, Little Lives UK

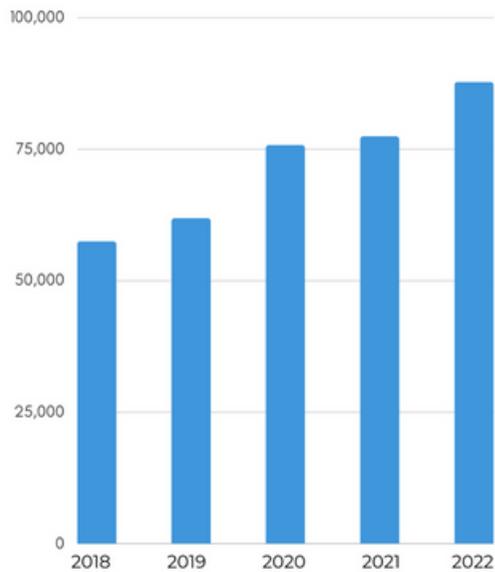


Children's Mental Health

Throughout 2022, our Giggle Doctors saw growing numbers of children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties in hospitals nationwide. Understanding more about this issue and how we can train and support Giggle Doctors to best help these children is an ongoing priority.

20% of children and young people in the UK have a probably mental health difficulty (1)

Number of mental health concerns about a child recorded by social workers (2)



With the continuing cost-of-living crisis, we can expect this situation to continue to worsen as more children are plunged into 'epidemic levels of poverty' (3). Children from the most deprived neighbourhoods are twice as likely to be affected by mental health difficulties as those from the least deprived (2).

While in hospital, a child's mental health suffers due to separation from family, school, friends, and the lack of opportunities for play (4). Giggle Doctors are trained to support children with mental health difficulties in clinical settings.

68% of parents said meeting a Giggle Doctor reduced their child's stress and anxiety



79% of parents said meeting a Giggle Doctor improved their child's mood

Theodora Giggle Doctors help children take control of their situation through play, creating opportunities for them to take the lead and make autonomous choices (5).

For many children, a Giggle Doctor visit could represent something akin to early intervention support, helping them build up their resilience in relation to their wellbeing, reducing their need for later mental health treatment and support (6).

This challenge our children and young people are facing is not going to go away and remains a key focus for us. In 2023 we'll be prioritising training for our Giggle Doctors to enable them to give the best experience to these children and young people.





THEODORA
Children's Charity
Much more than Laughter

We are proud that whether in person or virtually, Giggle Doctor visits are free for all children and their families, because everyone deserves a giggle!

Thank you to everyone who has supported us by sending donations, as you have seen, your impact is far reaching. Please help us continue to #giveagiggle by clicking on the arrow to donate.



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