



THEODORA
Children's Charity
Much more than Laughter



Theodora Children's Charity 2025 Impact Report

Welcome!

2025 was a year focused on reinforcing the quality and consistency of our Giggle Doctors visits across the country. Nevertheless, we still found time to make new plans and reflect on past connections.

We were delighted to establish a partnership with Rotherham General Hospital – a small district general hospital in which Giggle Doctor visits really help to expand the access children and young people have to play and creativity during their hospital treatment. One young patient told us:

“I had nothing to do before they came, I was bored and in a lot of pain. They took my mind off it and I found it really fun. I thought they were really funny and they definitely cheered me up!”

Child Patient, Rotherham General Hospital



Generous fundraising efforts by Lucy and Debs also inspired us to take time to reflect on how long term and deep some of our connections can be.

Turn over a couple of pages and you can read about their nephew Louis (also pictured right, with Dr Geehee and Dr Yoho) - a little boy who has left a legacy of inspiration for our charity and those who knew him.

It is such an honour to play a role in the lives of children like Louis - to get to know their families - and to contribute in our small way to finding the joy during their most challenging times.

Thank you so much to our many generous supporters who have continued to make our work possible for the last year. We hope you enjoy reading more about the impact your contributions have helped us make in the pages of this report.



Molly Franklin
Co-Chief Operating
Officer

André Poulie
Voluntary Director

Isabel Squires
International Evaluation
Lead

Did you know that in 2025,
Giggle Doctors...

Visited **16,522** children and
young people in hospital



And an estimated **46,592** parents and
carers, siblings, and hospital staff,
bringing our total beneficiaries in 2025 to
63,114!

Giggle Doctors also...



Celebrated 20 amazing years of visits at Sheffield Children's Hospital!



And started visits at Rotherham General Hospital in June



"What a fantastic service the Giggle Doctors gave our daughter, (and us too!). Our daughter was having a bad morning and was very down in the dumps but Dr Scribble and Dr Nic Nac cheered her right up!"

Parent, Rotherham General Hospital

Louis's Story

In 2025, Louis's awesome aunties Lucy and Debs walked part of the Camino de Santiago, raising over £3,300 to fund Giggle Doctor visits!

Here's the inspirational story behind this amazing effort.

"It starts with Dr Snug in Lewisham A&E, talking about elephant snot."



It's telling that this is how Louis's mum Cat chooses to begin the story of his cancer diagnosis and treatment. It's a story laced with pain, challenge and grief too, but it's the joy, the play and the living in the moment which comes through most strongly.



After being admitted to hospital, Louis was diagnosed with neuroblastoma - childhood cancer:

"He was 3 and a half at this point. We were told from the outset that they throw everything and the kitchen sink at neuroblastoma and

they keep nothing in reserve. That means that it is a really brutal first line of treatment: they do a cocktail of ten weeks of chemotherapy, they do radiotherapy, they do surgery, they do stem cell transplant followed by really brutal more chemotherapy, they do immunotherapy and it's...it's really brutal."

Louis was so young he didn't always want to take his treatment seriously, but ask anyone who met him how he felt about the Giggle Doctors, and they'll tell you the same thing:

"He took the Giggle Doctors very seriously."



So seriously that he designed his own Giggle Doctor coat - sketching out designs just like grown up Giggle Doctors do.

And he had his own Giggle Doctor name: **Dr Star.**

Over the course of Louis's medical journey, the Giggle Doctors got to know his family well. From that first moment in A&E, to helping Louis with the words when he rang the bell to signal the end of his gruelling 16 months of treatment:

"They were there every step of the way."



You want every childhood cancer story to finish with ringing the end of treatment bell, but sadly that wasn't the case for Louis.

"This is the terrifying day we went in for a scan a year later to find out that he'd relapsed," Cat says.

It's the news no family ever wants to receive, but for Louis that day was also full of the excitement of seeing Dr Yoho and Dr Dotty again.



Medical teams throw everything they've got at neuroblastoma, as Cat described. Very sadly, this means when a child does relapse, there are few options left.

She recalls the last time they saw the Giggle Doctors at The Royal Marsden:

"We knew that Louis really wasn't very well - it was two and a half months before he died."

It was Dr Yoho and Dr Geehee that day. And it's not an encounter Dr Geehee will forget any time soon:

"I remember seeing him when he was very, very poorly. I played his favourite song, Prince Charming:

♪ Don't you ever stop being handsome, Showing us you're dandy... ♪

And he started moving his hands and his body as if he was going to be dancing to the song.



He lifted himself up and started doing the actions to the song - it was very moving, it was fantastic - and that's my lasting memory of him. Even in the last moment he was able to engage with us, it was with absolute joy and play.

I'll never forget that actually - it drives me when I'm working to think no matter what, you could always give something to the interaction that you're having with the child. And you can always get something back, even if it's a raise of a hand or the raise of a finger."



It's so hard not to focus on wishing it was Louis, now a teenager, writing this article, but as his mum Cat so insightfully puts it:

“There will always be some lives that are short and it’s really important having charities like Theodora that really focus on how to make those lives better.”

It's clear to see how the ripple effects of Louis's vibrant personality are still reverberating through the lives of those who knew him – and also through the lives of many of us who didn't. The lasting legacy of Dr Star inspires us every day in our mission to improve the lives of children and young people in hospital.

There's no one better to sum this up than Louis's mum, Cat:

“When children have those extended periods of hospital stays, they need to be in the moment and they need to – when they're up to it – enjoy life, and the Giggle Doctors showed how important that was and how possible that was really, to make fun out of any small thing.”



This is an abridged version of Louis's story. The full version is available on our website.



Cycling Superstars!

Cencora Alliance Healthcare have been generous supporters of Giggle Doctor visits for five years, and in 2025 alone they raised over £88,000. Much of it was raised through amazing charity events including a gruelling 300 mile cross-border London to Paris cycle challenge, with their cyclists being determined to raise as much as possible to help young children and their families in hospital.



“Partnering with Theodora to help children and families during extremely difficult times has been both humbling and rewarding. The engagement from the Theodora team and Giggle Doctors with our fundraising activities has been tremendous and we continue to be inspired by the work carried out.”

Sam, Head of Communications
Cencora Alliance Healthcare



Did you know...
£88,000 could fund a year of
weekly visits at 2 specialist
children's hospitals





From one hospital to the next

Many children experience stays in multiple different hospitals. A medical journey can start with a rush to A&E at their local hospital, followed by treatment at a larger dedicated children's hospital.

Giggle Doctors travel across their region, meaning sometimes they meet children several times during their treatment journey bringing, repeated opportunities for play and connection at critical moments of stress.

Scarlet was one of a number of children like this who met the Giggle Doctors in 2025. The first time was at her local hospital in Rotherham, and then later at Sheffield Children's Hospital (pictured below).

"I cannot explain how much the Giggle Doctors' visit made a difference, we went from sadness to laughter in the space of half an hour!"

Diane, Scarlet's mum

Follow the link to read Scarlet's story in detail and learn more about how Giggle Doctor visits helped reduce the trauma footprint from her hospital stays.

Click here to read Scarlet's Story!





Giggle Doctor Training

We prioritise Giggle Doctors having a range of skills which equip them to connect and communicate with children and young people no matter their needs.

This strategy informs the training Giggle Doctors do when they first join the charity, and also our planning for the ongoing training we provide each year.

For example, in 2025 we collaborated with Bamboozle Theatre Company who specialise in creating transformative experiences for learning disabled young people.

This included an introduction to the Bamboozle principles which have been developed over decades of working in the field, as well as opportunities for Giggle Doctors to explore these in practice, for example working together whilst communicating non-verbally.



When they're not in the hospitals, Giggle Doctors work in a wide range of other performance related roles. For example, Dr Nic Nac is puppeteer and puppet maker.

She called on her specialist expertise to run a fantastic training session for her colleagues on using puppetry in hospitals to enhance interactions with children and their families. This gave Giggle Doctors new strategies to connect families in a playful way with objects in their hospital environment.





Helping reduce trauma

Giggle Doctors work in giggles, magic, jokes, and silliness – but our supporters know that the impact the Giggle Doctors have is so much more than just laughter.

In August 2025, we published an article about empowering children and young people to find their voices again when they're in hospital. We explored how, through the power of play, Giggle Doctors can help children find connection and express themselves during what can be traumatic and stressful periods.

It's increasingly common to see the theme of trauma in children and young people's experiences of hospital and healthcare being explored through research in the sector. For example, in the Autumn, Starlight published their annual Play in Healthcare Week reports on this topic, titled "Causes of Trauma from Children's Healthcare."





The results of Starlight’s research corroborate what children, families, and hospital staff tell us about Giggle Doctor visits – namely that play is a powerful tool for the reduction and prevention of trauma, as well as a means to provide joy, connection, and empowerment for children and young people at incredibly vulnerable and difficult times.

As we look forward to 2026, we’re committed to continuing this important work and providing the most we can for the children and young people who need us.





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Follow us on social
media

@GiveAGiggle

Thanks to our generous supporters, Giggle Doctor visits are free for all children and families in hospital!

If you'd like to give the gift of giggles, please scan the QR code.



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