

A helping hand for families whose children battle illness

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A new volunteer scheme which provides help to families whose children have life-limiting illnesses is now up and running.

East Anglia's Children's Hospices (Each) has introduced Help at Home, a scheme backed by the *Cambridge Independent* to provide support to link families with a caring individual who can help with everyday tasks such as cooking, ironing, cleaning and gardening.

Money raised by the *Cambridge Independent* and other supporters will help fund the training, travel and ongoing support of approximately 45 volunteers who will help make the family's lives a little easier.

One of the first families to use Each Help at Home are Michael and Hannah Ganderton, whose four-year-old daughter Iona has an encephalocele. The condition means a part of the brain grows outside of the head, and as a result suffers from hydrocephalus (water on the brain) and epilepsy.

Volunteer Frances Smith has visited the Gandertons at their home in Peterborough once a week since the end of November.

"She's been amazing," said Hannah. "I've been able to get support with the jobs I find difficult to catch up on, like cooking a meal or washing up, or laundry.."

"She also helps me with things like paperwork that never gets done – just because so much of my time is taken up caring for Iona and the other children [sons Reuben and Joel]."

She added: "To have her coming in on a Monday morning is something I look forward to, and just having a bit of company as well is quite nice."

"She's even helped my eldest boy practise his piano and violin because



Hannah and Michael Ganderton with daughter Iona and, right, Each volunteer Frances Smith, who helps at the family's home

she's got a musical background."

Frances, a piano teacher by profession, said: "It took a few visits to settle down into understanding what Hannah's expectations were of me, and to get the feel of the family dynamic."

"Hannah and her husband really have their hands full so they need all the support that we can give them. They're a lovely family."

She added: "The training and the support from the hospice is fantastic and they really take care of their volunteers, as well as the families and the children."

However, the scheme still needs financial support to ensure its success can continue. So far the Each Help at Home appeal stands at £69,237 from a target of £87,500. This includes the costs of a coordinator to



ensure the volunteers are matched to families in the greatest of need, freeing up their time to spend with their children.

■ If you have a fundraising idea, please get in contact with gemma.gardner@iliffmedia.co.uk. You can also make a donation at virginmoneygiving.com/fund/EACHHelpAtHome.

Child's grave 'disturbed' at village church

Police are continuing an investigation into criminal damage to a child's grave in a Cambridgeshire churchyard.

Officers conducted a night vigil at the church in Cottenham after a member of the public spotted that a child's grave had been tampered with.

Police spent most of the early hours of January 5 parked close to All Saints' Church in the village High Street.

A police cordon was placed around the area as investigations began.

It had been thought that the child's body could have been removed following the discovery of freshly-dug earth close to the grave but following investigations by a CSI team, the incident is now being treated as criminal damage.

A spokesperson for the Cambridgeshire force said: "Following investigations, we are confident that a body has not been removed from the grave."

"The police cordon has been taken down and we are now investigating the incident as criminal damage to the grave."

The family of the deceased was informed of the developments.

New homes on gardens

Back gardens in Coldhams Lane, Cambridge, could be used as part of the development land for 14 new homes.

A planning application, which is being considered by Cambridge City Council today (Wednesday), seeks the construction of 14 three-bedroom homes on gardens to the rear of 300-314 Coldhams Lane, and the demolition of No 308.

The homes would be a mixture of terraced and semi-detached.

Objections to the scheme have come from nearby residents as well as St Philip's Primary School, which is concerned the new homes would impact on safeguarding the children due to proximity of development to the playground. St Philip's has also requested only obscure glazed windows are used in rooms directly overlooking the school.

The application has been recommended for approval by city council planners.

'How much will you pay to help county policing?' asks PCC

Police and crime commissioner Jason Ablewhite has urged the public to demonstrate how much they are willing to pay to support the police force as part of their council tax bill for 2018/9.

The commissioner launched a short survey last week to

establish how the idea of paying more resonated with residents.

Mr Ablewhite said: "One of my duties is to ensure that Cambridgeshire constabulary has the resources it needs to keep people safe. The constabulary is already a very

efficient force with savings of £17.2million made over the last five years to meet budget reductions. As we look forward and plan our budget for 2018/19, it is important for me to understand views on how much people are willing to pay

towards policing the county. Changes in crime types and an overall increase in calls for service means that more officers are needed to keep people safe."

A link to the survey can be found at surveymonkey.co.uk/r/W3CD8P3.

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