

# Hospice's support runs from the darkest days to the fun times

Making precious memories for families, East Anglia Children's Hospices is the silent support network hundreds of people rely on. As part of our fundraising campaign for the Milton hospice, GEMMA GARDNER went to see some of its work.

**T**ouching the lives of dozens of families in Cambridge every year, the staff at East Anglia Children's Hospices (Each) go the extra mile to meet the needs of every child they support.

It is the only service of its type in the county, caring for babies, children and young people with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions.

Its Milton hospice – one of three, along with The Treehouse in Ipswich and Quidenham in Norfolk – is nestled among trees, a haven of peace just a stone's throw from the High Street.

Centre manager Josie Dwyer has worked for Each for almost 20 years, the last 10 in Milton.

"Many people don't know the children's hospice exists and the need for it. The fact we work with more than 100 families each year speaks for itself," she said.

"Our care work is around the clinical needs of the child and to make sure we are addressing their needs, but we see the child as more than just their condition – we are trying to meet the child's social needs as well as their clinical need.

"Every family is different, too. We can have two families who may look the same but their needs are very different.

"The focus of our support work has been about providing family support close to people's homes. For example, we run groups for siblings – both bereaved and not – families and

teenagers among others."

Currently, 357 children and young people receive care from Each and 439 family members get face-to-face well-being support. Of those, 230 – 113 children and young people, plus 117 family members – receive care and support from Milton.

Counsellor Jill Foster said: "We provide care for children in their own homes but also in the hospice. We also provide family support and support for siblings. In that work, what we're trying to do is give the brothers and sisters space for themselves, where they can talk about things that are important to them, talk to other children in similar situations.

"We try to help them understand their own feelings and help them express their feelings and work out how they can tell their parents important things because they are important too."

The hospice has six bedrooms for children and four for families to use for overnight stays. There is a multi-sensory room, a hydrotherapy pool, music room, play room, teenage room, sensory garden and specialist outdoor play equipment.

Hoists make it easy for young people to be moved around and wide doorways allow children to take part in sessions without leaving bed.

Offering weekend overnight breaks, hydrotherapy sessions for the entire family and art and music therapies, the work carried out by



the hospice is invaluable for families.

"We provide music therapy sessions within the hospice and the wider team also do lots of music activities. It's something many of the children respond to, even those with limited ability. It's an important medium for communicating and expression – and fun!" said Josie.

The hydrotherapy sessions are particularly key for families, giving them the chance to be close.

Last year the hospice delivered around 13,000 sessions of care and support – 5,000 of well-being activity, 4,000 of nursing care (including short breaks) and 4,000 of specialist symptom management support.



Top, the hydro pool. Above left, the children's sensory room, above right children outside in the play area

Pictures: East Anglia's Children's Hospice



Members of staff at East Anglia Children's Hospice in Milton, from left, Helen Thrower, Jill Foster and Christine Baines

Picture: Keith Heppell

## Join our campaign

The *Cambridge Independent* is campaigning to raise **£87,500** to bring Each's Help at Home service to Cambridgeshire. Here's how it works and what you can do to make it happen.

The aim of Each Help at Home is to link a caring individual to a family to provide practical support, such as cooking, driving, cleaning and gardening.

The type of help needed will vary greatly. For some people it might be maintaining the garden, for others help with a one-off job that otherwise would never get done.

The service is needed because caring for a child with complex



care needs or a serious illness can be physically and emotionally draining, taking a huge amount of time – which is more precious than anything to families.

The service will be set up and secured for three years with £87,500 that the *Cambridge Independent* has pledged to help raise by galvanising readers,

businesses and anyone who wants to make a difference.

Hugh Fenton-Anwyll, Each volunteer manager, said: "Each Help at Home really has been so beneficial for families in Suffolk and will make a massive difference to those we support in Cambridgeshire.

"We're very much looking

forward to keeping readers informed about the service and seeing what ideas they come up with to help raise money."

The money will be spread evenly over the first 36 months of the service. Most importantly, it will fund the training, travel and ongoing support of approximately 45 volunteers and a volunteer co-ordinator.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Gillian Phillpot, Each volunteer services administrator, on 01223 205183 or at [volunteerservices@each.org.uk](mailto:volunteerservices@each.org.uk).

■ **The £87,500 will provide three years of funding, paying for a**

**volunteer co-ordinator as well as training volunteers.**

■ **We need your help with the fundraising. You can donate at [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/EACHHelpAtHome](http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/EACHHelpAtHome)**

■ **You can drop off cash or cheques – made payable to Each – at the charity's office at 42 High Street, Milton, Cambridgeshire CB24 6DF.**

■ **Or you can set yourself a challenge and get your family, friends and colleagues to sponsor you. Be sure to let us know: [gemma.gardner@iliffmedia.co.uk](mailto:gemma.gardner@iliffmedia.co.uk)**