

TLC TEDDIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

I have been working as a Play Specialist in the Paediatric Emergency Department for the past 4 years. My main responsibility is to supervise and deliver play and distraction therapy for the children within the department. I settle the children into the hospital environment by reassuring and relaxing them. As I'll explain in a moment, the donation of the TLC teddies has made this task much easier.

For many children their visit to the Emergency Department is their first experience in a hospital setting and it is therefore vital to make it a positive one. The children who we treat can be very frightened and are sometimes extremely distressed.

They must be able to convey their fears and worries in order for me to help alleviate and overcome these feelings. Communicating effectively with a distressed child can be a problem however and it's therefore important to use play therapy techniques to converse on their wavelength.

Making things fun for the child is a priority and the TLC teddies play a huge part in this.

Medical procedures such as the application of steri-strips or pots for example, are often demonstrated on the teddy first to prepare the child for their forthcoming treatment. It reduces their anxiety and encourages co-operation.

The teddies are also used as a reward for their behaviour and bravery. They act as a positive symbol for the hospital and leave a lasting impression in the child's mind. Possessing a TLC teddy is a reminder to them that visiting the hospital isn't so bad.

It is hard for me to explain the effect these wonderful teddies have within our department because the only way we can measure their success is by the change in the child's emotions. It is no exaggeration to say that a child's mood and overall perception of their treatment can be completely changed for the better by using the teddies and speaking personally, it truly is a pleasure to watch.

It's amazing. Something that seems so trivial to us "grown-ups" can have such an impact on a youngster and this wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the generosity of the Freemasons.

I'd like to finish by thanking you on my behalf, and on behalf of the children who these teddies make such a difference to.

Laura Burton
Hospital Play Specialist
Hull Royal Infirmary

