



Francis House Children's Hospice

Specialist Paediatric Palliative Care and Support

Who we are and what we do



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Welcome

What do you think of when you think of a children's hospice? You might be surprised to find out what we do, how we help families and what we are all about. This publication has been created to help share information about the services we provide.



We want to dispel the common misconception that children's hospices are only about end-of-life care. While providing outstanding end-of-life care is a fundamental part of our role, Francis House supports babies, children, young people and their families throughout their journey, helping them to live life as fully as possible. We want to spread the word about the many different ways we help families who find themselves caring for a child who is living with a life-shortening or life-threatening illness. For some families, this vital care and support lasts for years, while for others it may be months, weeks or days.

Based in Didsbury, South Manchester, at any one time we are supporting hundreds of families from across Greater Manchester. Our staff work at our hospice and visit people in their homes or in other places in the community where our families need us, including hospitals.

Our doors are open 365 days a year and we couldn't do what we do without a team of highly skilled professional staff and volunteers. We work in partnership with NHS staff and services, but are an independent charity, funded mainly by charitable donations.

I hope you enjoy learning more about us.

If you want to know how to refer someone for our help, or if you have any questions, please get in touch - we would love to hear from you.

R Taylor

Rachael Taylor, Chief Executive Francis House Children's Hospice

About us

What we offer

We aim to be alongside families, wherever they are on their journey.

Our services are tailored to meet a wide variety of needs, from practical support and specialist healthcare to emotional wellbeing and family events.

Here's a quick overview of what we do. For more detail on these services, read on. You can also use the coloured tabs along the side of this brochure, to quickly find the services you are most interested in.



**A chance
to recharge**



**Care at home
& in the
community**



**Specialist
healthcare**



**Emotional
support**



Psychotherapy



**Support for all
the family**



**Complementary
therapies**



End of life care



**Bereavement
support**



Family events

Who we can help

Francis House provides care and support to families from across Greater Manchester who are caring for a seriously ill baby, child, teenager or young adult.

The criteria for acceptance by Francis House is that the child has a life-shortening or life-threatening condition which means they have a shorter than usual life expectancy and that they have been referred and accepted prior to their 16th birthday. We can also accept children aged 16-18 years of age who need end of life care.

Once accepted, the young person can continue to receive care from us for as long as they choose, as there is no upper age limit. Due to advances in medicine, many children are able to live much longer with a life-shortening illness than was previously the case and many of those we support are now young adults.

To find out how to refer a child or young person, see back page.



“ Francis House is a place for the whole family to relax and have fun
- a home from home where they can find support and understanding. **”**



Our approach

Hospice care was founded on the idea of holistic care – supporting the widest needs of a person – physical, emotional and spiritual. At Francis House we care for the child or young person and, importantly, for the people who love and look after them.

We deliver specialist healthcare, emotional support, practical help, advice and friendship. We help children and their families connect with others in similar circumstances, offering a comfortable home-from-home environment. We offer help and advice and a much-needed break for parents from their caring role.

We support and respect people of all faiths and none.

Our staff work in partnership with other health professionals to ensure continuity and an integrated approach.

We aim to help seriously ill children, young people, and those around them, to live life as fully as their conditions allow and to fulfil their wishes and dreams, as far as we can.

“ It’s somewhere where you can come and remember what it’s like to be a mum or dad or a parent, rather than a nurse doing medical interventions. ”



Specialist healthcare



At Francis House, families have access to a range of healthcare professionals who understand and get to know the children and young people we support.

Our doctors and nurses communicate with the other medical professionals involved, including within hospitals, to ensure continuity of care. Staff are kept up to date with each child's condition so care is co-ordinated and safe.

We have nurses trained to manage specialist clinical procedures including IV medication, artificial ventilation, tracheostomy and gastrostomy care. While we are not an acute hospital, we are fully equipped to respond as if we were.

We help families manage their current situation and plan ahead as their child's condition progresses.



Our team includes:

Specialist nurses and carers, providing front-line expert care to children and young people, and support to their families.

Doctors on call 7 days a week, with a daily visit to co-ordinate care, assist with diagnosis, give advice and prescribe medication.

Psychotherapists providing mental health support to young people and parents, helping them process their feelings, reduce anxiety and improve wellbeing.



Respite care

It's not just a seriously ill child who lives with a life-shortening or life-threatening condition, but their brothers, sisters, parents and carers too. Alongside the practical demands of complex medical care come significant emotional challenges.

Respite for the child and for their family can make a huge difference, helping everyone feel less alone, to recharge, and more able to carry on.

At Francis House, we know families need to feel safe and confident about the quality of care their loved one will receive. We offer home and daytime visits, and in some cases short stays, depending on need. We build strong relationships with families, so that everyone becomes familiar with us over time. We also provide comfortable rooms for children and self-contained on-site accommodation for families, so they can be close to their child while getting some respite from caring.

Families visiting or staying can expect:

- A friendly, home-from-home environment, completely different to a hospital
- Expert, person-centred care addressing the child's medical and emotional needs
- High standards of infection control and medical care
- Support for the whole family, including siblings
- Opportunities to meet other families in similar circumstances

“ It's the little things. **When you arrive, you feel lighter.** When you leave, they've done all your washing so you don't have to when you get home. ”





Day, home & community care

Francis House supports families at home, in community settings and in hospitals, as well as at the hospice. Care is provided by experienced registered nurses and carers who also work at the hospice and are often the first point of contact for families following a referral.

How we help depends on what each family needs at the time - whether that's advice, practical support such as equipment, a response to a crisis, or simply the chance for a parent to take a break or attend an appointment while someone else takes over the caring.

We offer support tailored to each family, including:

- Daycare at the hospice, where children can use facilities such as our sensory room or hydrotherapy pool, or join activities and social groups with peers
- Support for children, young people and their families during acute or long-term hospital admissions
- Daycare and end of life care at home, delivered by specially trained staff
- Attendance at meetings and co-ordination with other health professionals
- Home visits offering advice, support and future planning for parents
- Help with practical matters and signposting to other services



“ All the children have a life-shortening or life-threatening condition. You can't change that, but **you can change the quality of the life they live.** ”

Therapies & support groups

Complementary therapies

Complementary therapies are extremely popular with our families and the children and young people we support. These can include massage, reflexology and HEARTS (Hands on, Empathy, Aromas, Relaxation, Textures and Sound) process therapy.

These work alongside our other services, providing additional support to improve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

“ Since starting massage therapy, I feel my mental and physical health has improved...

I am so grateful that we have the opportunity to be offered these amazing treatments and therapies. ”



Emotional support and groups

We offer one-to-one emotional support for young people and their families, helping with whatever they are facing - whether concerns about the future, changes in their situation, or stresses and worries unrelated to illness or caring.

Support groups offer the chance to meet others in similar circumstances who understand, to talk things through and share experiences. Groups sometimes take part in activities such as messy play, sensory play, crafts or eating together.

We offer:

- Social groups for children, teenagers and young adults, building confidence and friendships
- One-to-one support including counselling
- Sibling groups, giving brothers and sisters the chance to explore the challenges of having a seriously ill sibling and meet others in the same situation
- Parent groups, including a fathers' and a grandparents' group

“ We've seen huge changes in the confidence of a lot of the teenage boys from when they first came in. Before they wouldn't even look at us - now we hear them laughing and chatting. ”



End of life care

Every family and child is different, with their own preferences and needs. We work closely with the other professionals involved in a child's care, supporting them and their family through this difficult time.

Care at the end of life is centred on comfort, dignity and quality. We support end of life care at the hospice and have family accommodation where the whole family can stay together, close to the child's room. We can also work with other healthcare professionals to enable a child to remain at home if this is preferred.

We offer:

- Expert palliative care, focused on comfort and relief of symptoms
- Emotional support
- Memory making - helping create keepsakes that feel right for the family, such as hand and footprints
- Religious and spiritual support for any faith background or none, including arranging visits or blessings from a family's own faith community
- Practical help and advice



“ We held our daughter during her very difficult time but **Francis House held us during our difficult time.** ”

Rainbow Rooms

Francis House has three Rainbow Rooms, specially designed places for families who would like their child to stay at the hospice for a short period after death, until the funeral.

Families can choose to personalise the room with favourite toys, bedding or photographs.

Adjoining the Rainbow Rooms are comfortable lounges giving the family space and privacy and access to our gardens and other facilities. Separate areas for families to sleep are available.

Families may visit their child any time they want to. Extended family members or friends may arrange to visit if families wish. Support with making funeral arrangements is available if needed.

Children or young people who have died at home or in hospital are also able to use the Rainbow Rooms and access ongoing bereavement support from Francis House.



Bereavement support

Our Bereavement Team supports parents, siblings and wider family following the death of a child, providing a space to speak openly and to work through loss and grief.

We offer:

- One-to-one or couples sessions - private and confidential, held at Francis House or at home
- Parent groups, offering a chance to share experiences and connect with others in similar situations
- Psychotherapy for parents from our trained psychotherapist
- Shining Stars, our specialist bereavement programme for siblings, and Shooting Stars, which brings young people together to reconnect for ongoing support afterwards. These programmes help children and young people to process their feelings and find meaningful ways to remember their brother or sister
- Counselling for children, delivered by our bereavement team or trained counsellor



Families also have an opportunity to join in with our annual Memory Day event, where we welcome families of children we have cared for back to the hospice. It is a gentle and supportive way to remember, reflect and connect with others who share similar experiences. Many families tell us they value the chance to honour their child while also sharing positive memories of their time with us.

“ In Shining Stars, they meet children in the same situation... they can talk openly about what they’ve been through. Other friends might have lost a grandparent or even a parent, but few children have lost a brother or a sister. ”





Jen, Flo and Riccardo's story

“ Before we came, I thought a hospice was for end of life. It's really not, **it's for the here and now – it's about creating memories and sharing experiences in a happy place.** They're there for all of us, not just Flo. ”

Flo is 11 years old and a real character. She's got a cheeky smile and a great sense of humour. At two and a half she was diagnosed with a life-shortening regressive condition called Late Infantile GM1. She's not able to walk or talk and she needs 24/7 care.

When Flo was diagnosed, we got launched into this world and told to go home and make memories. Someone told me about Francis House. I expected it to be really clinical and look like a hospital, but it's really not. It immediately felt like a home from home.

Francis House are there for Flo, but also for me as a mum and a person, caring for my daughter. They're there for her brother Riccardo too. It's a place that we can all go to for a break and a change of scene.

Flo knows everyone so well. She gets to do so much stuff. She goes in the jacuzzi and has so many lovely experiences that I can't give her at home.

They take as good a care of Riccardo as they do Flo. There is so much support and opportunity available to him.

The families at Francis House are on the same journey as us. They really get it and they understand. It gives you a chance to breathe.

It's a special place that we couldn't live without.

Key contacts

Francis House Children's Hospice
390 Parrswood Road, Didsbury,
Manchester M20 5NA

Hospice reception: **0161 434 4118**

Fundraising enquiries: **0161 443 2200**

Email: **ask@francishouse.org.uk**

francishouse.org.uk



Francis House Family Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (charity no 328659) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales (company no 02519173).



Referrals

See page 6 for information on who we can help. Contact us or scan the QR code for more information about how to apply to refer someone for our services.

francishouse.org.uk/referrals



Visit us

Scan the QR Code for more information on what we do and the ways that you can get involved in supporting the hospice.

francishouse.org.uk



Our video

You can also watch a video about how we help families.

francishouse.org.uk/watch-our-video