

Update of CAT's (Children and Teens Service) at Isabel Hospice

April 2019



“Grandma with the red shoes” by her granddaughters

Isabel Hospice provides free palliative care and support for patients and their families living with cancer and other life-limiting illnesses such as Motor Neurone Disease, end stage renal, end stage heart, respiratory or other neurological conditions, throughout eastern Hertfordshire. The population we serve is 370,000 people. This includes some very deprived areas, in particular parts of Hatfield and Waltham Cross. The Hospice provides enormous support to families and friends, caring for the patients and all those around them. Last year we cared for 1,555 patients and 595 family members were supported of whom **163** were children. The Hospice provides a wide range of services including a Family Support and Bereavement Service.

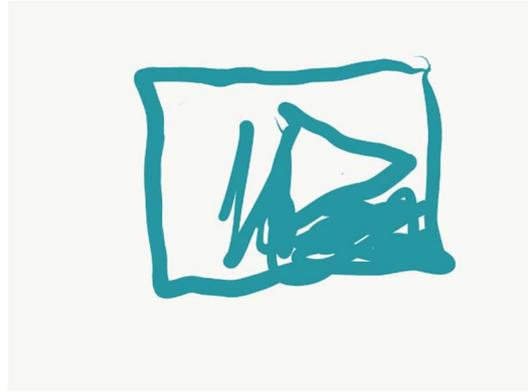
During 2018 we were delighted to receive two donations from The Art Society East Herts which enabled us to buy art materials for our children’s workshops and an iPad for use by our children’s counsellor and our children to use during 1:1 sessions.

The response to the iPad has been overwhelming, the children are quick to learn the basics and quickly become more adapt at changing the pen size and colours. They can’t make a mistake and spoil their picture because they can erase and redraw. The artwork created has stimulated difficult conversations around loss, grief and anger which is hard to articulate, especially for younger children. In this update, we have included examples of their work, the first picture shows grandma in her red shoes and wearing purple, she is with her granddaughters. One child has Asperger’s, the other is 3 years old, they created the picture together and talked about grandma and the memories of her that are important to them.

In eastern Hertfordshire, an estimated 195 children have a parent die each year, with an estimated 1245 school-age children who have been bereaved of a parent or sibling in childhood. Children are disadvantaged by bereavement and experience a range of responses depending on their different circumstances. Many children experience anxiety following a death and are at increased risk of depression, physical ill-health and accidents, and are more likely to take risks with their health and to die early. They have an increased risk of mental disorder, suicide attempt and hospitalisation for a psychiatric disorder. Children, parents and teachers report difficulties at school arising from poor concentration, lack of interest or bullying.

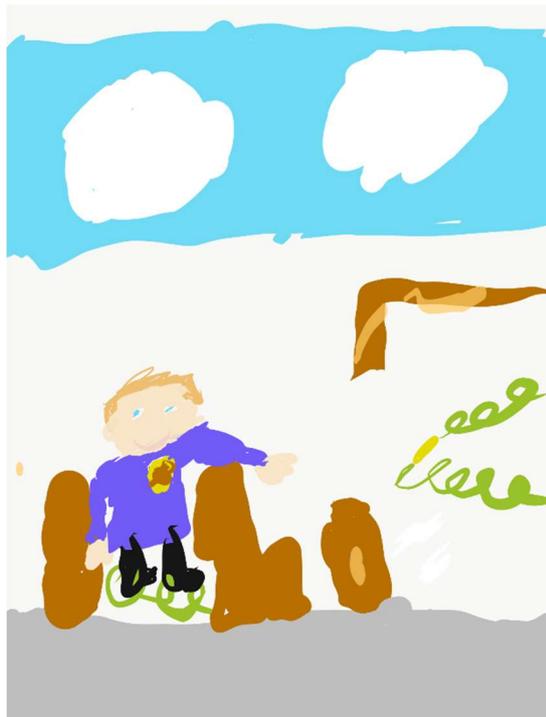
“Youtube” by a boy with Special Educational Needs

This second picture was drawn by a young boy whose mother died, he now lives with his nan and attends special needs school. He has difficulty engaging with others, his picture is YouTube. When he wants to escape he finds comfort in stepping into the world of YouTube, this picture started a conversation about coping with loss and escapism.



As children face new challenges in their development, such as changing schools, facing exams or moving house, new issues related to their bereavement may emerge. Children may have been seen on a one-to-one basis, then later find that group work is more beneficial. The service offers them the opportunity to return.

The Isabel Hospice Children's Service supports bereaved children through one-to-one sessions, age-appropriate group work, social events, and art and drama activities. The Service accepts referrals from the Hospice of children who are facing an impending loss of a close relative or have already been bereaved. The Service also supports children from the local community who have been bereaved by suicide, sudden and unexpected death or accident. With referrals to our specialist service increasing, we have recently employed an additional counsellor to support as many children as possible.



“Safe space” by Cam

This picture was drawn by a young boy whose father died when he was 5 years old, he is now 10, and has been referred back to our service as he is growing up and experiencing anxiety with others which is affecting his time at school.

With our counsellor they discussed finding a safe space to go to during playtime, this picture shows him standing on the bouncy bridge in the school playground.

He loves drawing on the iPad and has created lots of pictures in his folder which can be referred to easily and progress shown.

We are now identifying appropriate mindfulness apps that can be used with the children to help them with their anxiety and show them methods of relaxation.

Thank you!

We are so grateful for the generous support of The Art Society East Herts, this vital service is entirely funded by the income from our supporters, on behalf of our children and their families- **Thank you!**

Tess Thorpe- Trusts and Foundations Officer, Isabel Hospice April 2019