

# YOUR ECHC

News from Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

[echcharity.org](http://echcharity.org)

Autumn 2025

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should face  
hospital  
alone

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Scottish charity number SC020862

# Welcome

## from ECHC CEO, Roslyn Neely



Welcome to this latest edition of our newsletter, **YOUR ECHC**. I want to begin with a simple but powerful message: **thank you**.

Thanks to your incredible support, we've been able to bring joy, comfort, and connection to children and families facing some of life's toughest moments. Whether it's a visit from our furry friends at Edinburgh Zoo, a summer filled with colour and creativity, or the quiet reassurance of a listening ear from Sam and Paula, your generosity makes it all possible.

This month, we're proud to launch the first phase of our bold new 10-year strategy. It's an ambitious vision – shaped by the voices of hundreds of families and staff – to ensure that **no child faces hospital alone**. We've heard loud and clear that what we do matters. But we also know there's more to be done. We're ready to do it. And we need your help.

You'll read stories that show the real impact of your support – from Sophie's journey through a frightening diagnosis to the family who "went home" via virtual reality. You'll also see how our community continues to rally around us, from Irene's inspiring centenary to the Motability Operations team's hilltop heroics.

And if you've ever wondered what your donations look like in action, we'd love to show you! Join us as we take part in Doors Open Days for the first time this September and see the magic for yourself.

We're so grateful to have you by our side. Together, we're making hospital stays brighter, kinder, and more hopeful. Let's keep going.

## Roslyn





## Bringing the wild to the wards

Every Thursday, something *roarsome* arrives at the children's hospital – our amazing friends from **Edinburgh Zoo!**

Thanks to our wild and wonderful partnership with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), children and their families get to meet amazing animals – all from the comfort of their hospital bed. From fluffy to scaly, shy to cheeky, the zoo brings the wonder of nature to young patients who might otherwise miss out.

Every week, Community and Discovery Officer Rebecca brings something new and exciting – whether it's painting pebbles for penguin proposals, or colouring special treat boxes for the zoo's big cat crew.

One especially heartwarming part of Rebecca's visits is her thoughtful collection of stories and

photos of animals who have had surgeries or been unwell themselves. These touching tales bring much-needed reassurance, reminding children that their favourite animals can get sick – and recover too.

As one young girl told us, "I was feeling sad because my school class was visiting Edinburgh Zoo today and I thought I was missing out. But then Rebecca brought the zoo to me instead! It really made my day."

**An enormous thank you to Edinburgh Zoo and RZSS for helping to ensure children can stay connected to nature, even when facing tough hospital stays.**

# No child should face hospital alone

## A 10-year vision to 2035

This month, we launch the first phase of our ambitious new 10-year strategy, a bold step in our mission to reach every child and family in hospital who needs us.

To shape this vision, we spoke to hundreds of families and staff. They told us loud and clear: the support we provide is making a difference. Thanks to your donations, we're able to lift some of the burden.

But they also highlighted the gaps. Boredom, loneliness, and isolation were common themes. The emotional and financial cost of having a child in hospital came up time and time again.

Children told us being in hospital can be scary; they feel left out from their friends. Parents and carers described the mental toll: the guilt, the worry, the exhaustion. For families already struggling to make ends meet, the hidden costs of hospital life – travel, food, time off work – can be devastating.



**We know that this isn't right.  
We want to change this.  
And with your help, we will.**

## Our problem

Right now, the support we offer reaches some children – but not all. Right now, there are around 500 seriously ill children in the hospital. Many won't get the kind of support that could make all the difference.

We're currently working to shape what this will look like – how we will address the emotional strain, how we will support those living in poverty, how we will bring comfort to ease the loneliness.

Because no child should feel alone. And no family should have to choose between being by their side and paying the bills.

**We can do better –  
but not without you.**



**“You feel so guilty seeking out basic comforts.”**

When Mollie (8) was admitted to hospital, mum Pennie faced the emotional and practical challenges of suddenly having to adjust to life on the wards.

“Mollie was scared and didn’t want me to leave her side. We spent days in her room – the cabin fever set in fast. Even stepping out for fresh air or food made me feel guilty. My husband was constantly driving back and forth with clean clothes. We were exhausted.

“The ECHC team made a huge difference. Just having someone sit with Mollie so I could grab a cuppa meant the world.

“The Hub was a lifeline, giving Mollie things to do. But evenings and weekends were tough – everything closed. Having something in place at those times would have helped so much. A cinema night was a highlight, but we needed more of that.

“What ECHC is planning with its 10-year strategy is phenomenal. It will help so many families like ours through an unplanned hospital stay.”



## Join our movement

Become a regular giver. Sign up for an event. Come to Sparkle and Shine (page 11). Spread the word. Volunteer. Ask your workplace to get involved.

**However you choose to help, you'll be making sure no child faces hospital alone.**



**Are you in?**

**Join our movement to ensure no child faces hospital alone. Scan the QR code today to find out how you can get involved.**

for up-to-date news follow us on  @echcharity

# Summer still happens in hospital - thanks to you

**“When summer starts, school stops - but medical appointments don’t.”**

That’s how one worried parent summed it up earlier this year.

Summer should be a time of fun, freedom, and family adventures. But for families caring for a sick child, the loss of routine and fear of an unexpected hospital stay can be overwhelming.

The families we meet tell us of summer plans thrown into chaos. Awesome activities abandoned. Holidays put on hold.



We wanted to change this, to make things better. And thanks to your support, we did.

Because of you, throughout July and August, the wards were filled with colour and creativity. From silent discos and a full-blown sports day for children who missed theirs at school, to Edinburgh Fringe and Book Festival visits, baby sensory meet ups and a Gala-style summer party, you helped to bring the sunshine to those spending their holidays in hospital.

For one family, who was far from home when their child was admitted, the combination of our virtual reality headset and Google Earth meant they were able to “go home” for a little while – a small but powerful comfort that wouldn’t have been possible without donations from supporters like you.

As we head into autumn, we’re getting ready to bring the same fun to young patients throughout the colder months – with pumpkin painting and more seasonal surprises already up our sleeve. Will you help to keep the excitement going?



**Scan the QR code to donate today.**

# DOORS OPEN DAYS 2025



Come and see  
the magic happen!

For the first time ever, Edinburgh Children's Hospital is taking part in Doors Open Days 2025 this September – and you're invited!

Join us on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September as we open our doors to show you firsthand how your support is making a real impact for seriously ill children and their families.

Guided tours will run every half hour from 10am to 3pm. Just drop by when it suits you.

**Rest assured, we won't be disturbing any children by taking you to the wards.**

But you will get to explore the spaces your donations are helping to transform.

You'll step inside our Hub, where families can find a cuppa, a bit of calm, and a listening ear. You can try your hand at interactive activities and discover how we bring distraction to long hospital days.

You'll also meet our brilliant NHS colleagues, who'll be running child-friendly simulations of procedures like blood tests.

This is your chance to ask questions, meet the team, and experience how we bring reassurance, comfort and fun to hundreds of families every year.

**Don't miss this unique opportunity to go behind the scenes! Drop in between 10am and 3pm on Sunday 28th September.**

See you then!

## Leave a Gift in Your Will

The "Sick Kids" has been at the heart of Edinburgh for over a century. By leaving a gift in your Will to ECHC, you can help that legacy live on.

Right now, gifts in Wills fund just 10% of our work each year – but they have the power to do so much more. With your support, we can do even more for seriously ill children and their families. Not just today, but for many years to come.

We have partnered with Jones Whyte Solicitors who will help you to write your Will, or Lasting Power of Attorney, for free. Be a Future Funder. Email [hello@echcharity.org](mailto:hello@echcharity.org) or call **0131 668 4949** to find out more.



# Spotlight on Sam and Paula, Family Support

Meet Sam and Paula – our compassionate family support champions. Together, they offer calm, comfort, and a listening ear to help families facing the unimaginable.

When a child is seriously ill, families arrive at the hospital exhausted, stressed and entirely focused on one thing: getting their child better. Everything else – self-care, sleep, time for siblings – gets pushed aside.

Sam explains, “We often meet families who are just completely overwhelmed. The guilt is a huge thing. Many won’t leave their child’s side, even to eat or rest. They don’t want to ask for help. But parents and carers *need* to take care of themselves too. This is where we come in.

“Sometimes that help is just sitting with their child for 20 minutes so they can have a shower, get some fresh air, or just breathe. Other times, they just need someone to have a blether with, someone to listen.”



Paula brings her experience of leading The Haven, ECHC’s pilot children’s mental health service in East Lothian. Now based in the hospital, she is helping to weave the same whole family approach into our support here. She says:

*“When you have a child who is struggling, whether physically or emotionally, the whole family feels it. We often meet families who are spread impossibly thin. They’re at the bedside of one child in hospital, but also worrying about siblings at home, missed work, bills, food...”*

“Families come in carrying this invisible bag that’s full of worry, guilt and stress. Our job is to hold that bag for a while. To let them know they don’t have to carry it alone.”



**You can help families  
get the support they need.  
Scan the QR code to donate today.**

# "The ECHC team made Sophie feel seen."

Dancing has been Sophie's passion since she was three years old. But at just 11, everything changed. Aches and pains crept into her body – at first mild, then unbearable.

Mum Lorraine says, "Doctors said it was just growing pains, but it got worse. A year in, you couldn't even touch her without her crying.

"One morning, she woke up and couldn't walk. We rushed her to hospital. I'll never forget lying on the ward, both of us crying, not knowing what was ahead."

Sophie was diagnosed with Systemic Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis which was affecting her whole body. Even her organs were inflamed. Then came a life-threatening complication: Macrophage Activation Syndrome. Her organs began shutting down. For two days, doctors didn't know if she would survive.

Lorraine says, "Those were the longest days of my life. Six weeks in hospital followed, and although steroids helped, they changed her body. Her face became puffy. She hardly recognised herself. She lost her confidence and had to stop dancing.

*"That's when she met the ECHC team and found The Hub."*



"I honestly don't know how we would have coped otherwise. For Sophie, the Hub became a safe space. She's naturally quite shy, but with the ECHC staff and volunteers, she felt at home.

*"For me, it was a lifeline. When you're living in hospital for weeks, not knowing what's next, the Hub is somewhere to breathe. Just sitting with a cup of tea, talking to someone who cares – it kept me going."*

"Two years on, our Sophie is back. Not just back on her feet but back dancing too! Hospital visits don't scare her anymore. Every time she comes in for treatment, she looks forward to going to the Hub and seeing her friends.

"Because of supporters like you, the Hub exists. Because of supporters like you, children like Sophie have a place to feel safe, to have fun and find connection, even in the hardest times. Thank you."

# Supporter Showcase



Strong legs and stronger hearts!

The mighty team at Motability Operations conquered not one, not two but seven Edinburgh hills – all in support of seriously ill children.

Pulling on their hiking boots and bearing some blisters, the team scaled Arthur's Seat, Corstorphine and Craiglockhart hills (to name a few!), completing a whopping 45,000 steps and covering 30.5km each to raise a phenomenal £5,300. Thank you Motability – you truly went above and beyond!



The mane event

Neigh long faces here! Musselburgh Racecourse truly went the extra furlong at its Luca's Ice Cream Family Raceday – raising an incredible £1,285.

From funfair rides to Star Wars snaps – and over 1200 free ice creams – it was a packed day of family fun. We're so grateful to everyone who came along and donated to help make hospital stays that little bit brighter.

## Irene's super centenary!



A very happy 100th birthday to incredible Irene – a super centenarian and cherished ECHC supporter.

Irene's grandson was diagnosed with a brain tumour and spent time being looked after by the children's hospital. For her big birthday, Irene asked for no presents, instead requesting donations to help other seriously ill children and their families.

Irene – you are an inspiration. Thank you so much for your kindness and we wish you the happiest 100th birthday from everyone at ECHC!

# Sparkle and Shine Christmas Carol Concert

The Dean, Edinburgh  
Thursday 4 December  
6pm-8.30pm

Join us for our Christmas Carol Concert,  
a heartwarming evening filled with music, joy and the spirit  
of giving, all in support of young patients and their families.

Scan the QR code below  
to get your ticket!



Edinburgh  
Children's  
Hospital Charity

**Sponsor**  
The Sparkle



# Please donate today!

## My details:

Title	<input type="text"/>	Full name	<input type="text"/>	
Address	<input type="text"/>		Postcode	<input type="text"/>
Email*	<input type="text"/>	Phone No*	<input type="text"/>	

## Yes, I'll help today with a gift of...

- £15** could pay for a child to understand, through play, the technology their surgeons use and help take away the fear of medical procedures.
- £44** could help provide a listening ear for a worried parent, a chance to talk through their emotions with someone who understands.
- £120** could provide escape and distraction through magic for eight children, whose stay in hospital could be painful and scary.
- Other** £

For security reasons do not send cash through the post

Cheque made payable to Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

Card

Card No:

Expiry:  /  CVC:

Signature  Date

## BOOST YOUR DONATION BY 25P FOR EVERY £1 YOU DONATE THROUGH GIFT AID.

*giftaid it*

Gift Aid is reclaimed by Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. In order to claim Gift Aid on your donation you must tick the box below.

I am a UK taxpayer and would like ECHC to reclaim the tax on donations I have made in the last four years and for all future gifts of money that I make to be Gift Aid donations. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year then it is my responsibility to pay the difference.

No I am not a UK tax payer.

Please email [hello@echcharity.org](mailto:hello@echcharity.org) if you wish to cancel this declaration.

**We have moved! Please note our change of address**

**PLEASE FOLD AND RETURN YOUR DONATION FORM TO:**  
Freepost Plus RTYB-TEGX-SZGG

Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity, c/o RHCYP & DCN Building,  
50 Little France Crescent, Edinburgh EH16 4TJ

You can also donate by scanning the QR code, visiting [www.echcharity.org/donate](http://www.echcharity.org/donate) or calling **0131 668 4949**



**Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity**

## Yes, I'll help long term by giving regularly

I want to give £

Every (please tick)  **Month**  **Quarter**  **Year**   
on the (please tick)  **1st**  **15th**  **25th**

**Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit** Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity  
Direct Debit Originator Number 801897



Account Name

Bank / Building Society Account No

Sort Code

Name of Bank / Building Society Branch

Bank Address

Postcode

### Instruction to your bank or building society

Please pay Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank / building society.

Signature

Date

## THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE

- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society. If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

\* You don't have to leave your email address or phone number, but if you do, we'll use these to keep you updated on our news, appeals and how you can get involved. You can opt out at any time by emailing [hello@echcharity.org](mailto:hello@echcharity.org) or calling **0131 668 4949**. We promise to keep your details safe and never sell them or swap them with anyone. Our privacy policy has been updated for fundraising purposes. The updated policy can be viewed at [echcharity.org/privacy-policy](http://echcharity.org/privacy-policy) or you can contact us for more information.

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