

# The Virtual Hospice

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In March 2020 as lockdown began, CHAS realised that we had to find new ways to support our children and their families who were unable to come into our hospices. Working with teams across the organisation, in a matter of weeks we created a new virtual hospice service. We used technology to support children in their own homes which became a lifeline to many of our families during what continues to be a frightening and unpredictable time.



## Sibling Support

"I am actually shocked at the fact G is doing the Zoom chat cos she is so shy, it's been brilliant that she has found enough confidence to do it and is really enjoying it. Thanks for helping look after her and giving her something each week to look forward to!!"

## Music Therapy

"Thanks so much for thinking of us. Sia loved it (well actually we all loved it!). Sia would be keen for another session again anytime! CHAS have made our day."

## Clowndoctors

"... you make me laugh and we're great friends."

"She really enjoyed the Clowndoctors yesterday, she loved talking about her call all night. Thanks for getting her involved."



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2020



# Virtual Activities

In response to lockdown we developed virtual activities to support parents and their children, including siblings, in their own home. For families who can't come to the hospice, we are taking our hospice to them.



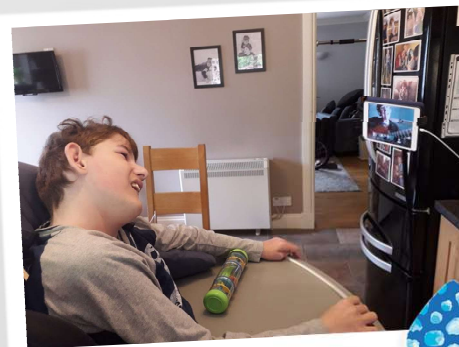
## Activity Packs

We're sending out activity packs full of arts and crafts to keep the children entertained.



## Clowndoctors

We developed virtual Clowndoctor visits to enable us to spread joy and laughter, and provide much needed human connection. The Clowndoctors bring the magic of therapeutic clowning directly into children's homes, providing opportunities for play, fun and positive experiences.



## Music Therapy Sessions

We set up music therapy sessions. Music therapists tune into each movement, reaction and expression of the children they're working with. They can then adapt their approach and the music they're playing to skilfully unlock potential and inspire positive emotions and interactions.

## YouTube Channel

We set up a YouTube channel with lots of fun activity based videos including arts and crafts, sensory ideas, storytelling, songs and Makaton signs.

## Sibling Catch Ups

We became aware that it was difficult to engage older siblings with the activities we were providing. So, we set up our sibling catch ups which involve lots of fun games, quizzes and activities for them to do during the session and after. These sessions are very much led by the young people themselves.



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# Virtual Support

## Bereavement Support

We hold a monthly virtual bereavement drop-in session for bereaved families to give parents an opportunity to talk with others who have lost a child. We also held our annual Remembering Day service for bereaved families virtually this year. The service is inclusive and reflective, and includes poetry and music. The name of every child who has passed away is read aloud by staff from across CHAS in a poignant reflection.

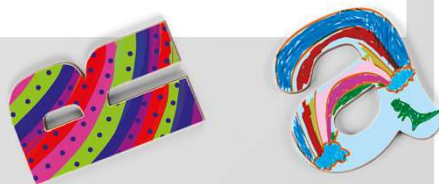


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## Family Support

The CHAS family support team have expanded support through our virtual hospice platform during Covid-19. The aim was to reduce isolation and make sure families felt connected. We did this by providing emotional support and assessing practical support needs for each family individually. Family Zoom sessions have been developed to support psychological health and wellbeing (psychological First Aid) to help families stay connected; talk about worries; look after their body/exercise; stay on top of difficult feelings; and take time to relax.



## Kindness Calls

We reached every CHAS family through regular kindness calls to support them during lockdown and using a trained, skilled team we were able to provide specialist input for periods of crisis right through to a friendly call to check in and remind families that they were not alone during this very difficult period.



## Volunteering – Letter Writing/Storytelling Calls

The letter writing service is a really simple cost effective way of communicating with CHAS families that brings a little joy and brightens a child's day. Some are receiving mail just for them for the first time in their lives. CHAS volunteers have also been providing storytelling calls over Zoom with CHAS families during lockdown and beyond.

## Medical Support

Our doctors have been providing medical support and advice to families on a virtual basis, providing reassurance to worried families. We are using the 'Near Me' consultations via the NHS to interact with and assess children at home and to work with their parents, all of whom seem very comfortable with communication by this route.



# Conclusion

In a matter of weeks, we created a new virtual hospice service. The service has been and continues to be a great success. Children and their families have told us that they have felt fully supported and heard during these difficult times. Using new and existing technology, we have remained in regular contact with families we support, more than we have ever done previously even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Given our success, we feel that we can't just 'go back to the way we were doing things before'. This experience has taught us that we can offer many of our services to all families virtually even after the pandemic ends, which will help us in our goal to reach every family in Scotland who needs us.

What are your favourite videos and why?

magic pictures  
dont feel alone  
friendly faces  
music  
tik tok  
messy play

"We have been so grateful to give her these little moments of excitement as so much of her life has changed, as has everyone's, but she loves getting her letters. I wouldn't change a thing - this has been working perfectly for us."

"The virtual hospice has given a platform for connection wherever we might be. I have continued to join Zoom chats when we were in the hospice and most importantly when we were in hospital during Covid-19 lockdown. Having the ability to reach out to staff and other families to share my anxieties meant that I was better able to cope with scary life events."

Sibs group number 4 feedback?

fun  
sweet  
loved it  
laugh



Children's Hospices Across Scotland

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