

Making More Smiles in 2022 - a monthly calendar.

The year began with visits at one hospital and one hospice in January and ended with visits at 40 hospitals and hospices in December. Despite the extra Infection Prevention & Control measures in place, Pod visits have been just as successful as before. To minimise Infection risks, a Pod entertainer visits only one hospital on any one day and to make this financially viable for our entertainers, all Pod visits consist of at least two 40-minute sessions. These longer visits are popular with hospitals as now the entertainer can visit more children in different wards and clinics.

JANUARY visits at Edinburgh Children's Hospital and Ty Hafan Children's Hospice.

FEBRUARY visits resumed at Royal Berks Reading, Queen's Romford, Birmingham Heartlands, St George's Tooting, and Wythenshawe hospitals.

Magician Malcolm Boxall visited Royal Berks Hospital.

" We had a lovely visit from Malcolm from Pod. I followed Malcolm around and he was amazing with the children. He definitely made a great impact on all of the children and their moods. He went into an oncology patient and made her extra happy with his jokes and magic tricks! He also made a patient who had been in for a while, smile for the first time which was extra nice to see! The impact Malcolm has on our patients is amazing and we absolutely love having him come to the children's ward here at the Royal Berks! 😊" (Play Leader Kci)



Entertainer Craig Gallimore (Skittleman) visited Queen's Hospital



Entertainer David Oakley visited Heartlands.

"After a very tough couple of years where life on the wards has been so different for the children, no access to playrooms and activities restricted, having David visit every month has been very much appreciated. I don't know how to explain how Pod visits makes such a difference to the day of a child on the wards. He has brought smiles, laughter, and gasps of amazement. David has helped children feel calm and distracted from impending surgery, children who are unfortunately long-term patients have benefited from seeing something to brighten their day! Equally parents and staff benefit too from the Pod visits and frequently ask when his next visit is!" (Play Leader Claire)

MARCH visits resumed at Rotherham General and Gloucestershire Children's hospitals.

APRIL No more hospitals added.

MAY visits resumed at Stoke Mandeville, Lister Stevenage, New Cross Walsall, Stepping Hill, Royal Brompton, Worthing hospitals and Rachel House Children's Hospice.

Magician Paul Megram (Colonel Custard) visited Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

"We have had an enormous amount of CAMHS (Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services) patients since the pandemic and it has been extremely difficult for them to be in hospital, but they interact with Colonel Custard on every visit, and it really breaks up their day and helps them to forget about their worries. They are left in wonder at how he actually does these amazing magic tricks that he does. I just say that 'it's just magic' no explanation needed. Our younger patients are often shy and worried about being in Hospital but all it takes is a balloon model in their favourite colour and they immediately smile and start chatting away. Colonel Custard has this amazing aura that just exudes happiness and fun which is infectious to us all and helps brighten everyone's day. He was welcomed back with open arms and a huge relief by the Staff, and it was like Covid has never happened and it was just another day on Ward 3." (Play Specialist Hayley)

Magician Russ Stokes visited New Cross. Russ was delighted to be working for Pod again, *"It was nice to be back out there putting smiles on children's faces"* and Play Specialist Samantha said, *"It was nice to have some normality back on the wards."*



Entertainer John Harding visited Stepping Hill.



"John was brilliant with all the patients, he took the time to learn all the children's names and engage with them in a way that met their individual needs and based on their age. We had lots of happy children on the ward after his visit. His joyful and positive personality alone brought happiness all around. We really look forward to seeing him again soon!" (Paediatric Nurse Jessica)

And there's a short video of a later visit https://fb.watch/hHKFL1Op_7/

JUNE visits resumed at Princess Royal Hospital Telford.

Magician David visited Princess Royal.

"We've had a lovely visit this morning with David. Lots of laughter coming from the playroom". (Play Specialist Kerry)

JULY visits resumed at Whittington Hospital.

AUGUST visits resumed at Northwick Park and John Radcliffe Oxford hospitals.

At Northwick Park, our entertainer Julie's longer visit time was put to great use.

"We have been delighted to have Auntie Julie back on the ward. It has brought the ward back to life. We have slowly been encouraging the children to socialise again. Julie's sessions are ideal way to

encourage the children to socialise and move away from their bed space. We encourage the children and families to join Julie in the Playroom and it's amazing to see how the children and parents' moods improve. There's laughter and joking. This is an ideal time for children to make connections with other children. This all aids their recovery and helps them cope with the challenges of being in hospital. Enabling a positive hospital is so important for their future health.

We then always save time for our children who can't leave their bed space for whatever reason. Auntie Julie loves a challenge, and we never leave out our teen patients who think they might be too cool to engage, she will adapt what she is doing to involve them, such as teaching them balloon modelling. Our ward is very unpredictable, I never know how many children will be available to join us or how many children we will have on the ward as things change very quickly on Jack's Place. During her visit last week, one of our patients and parents were so excited to meet her but had to have IV medication during the visit. We promised a visit by the bedside but when we got there, he was asleep. Auntie Julie made him some models and hung them on his cot so he would have a surprise when he woke.

We never waste Auntie Julies' time. Since she has been back, she has also visited Rainbow Ward which is our POSCU (Paediatric Oncology Shared Care Unit) Day-Care Unit, where there are often children waiting for blood tests. Julie is a fab distraction while they wait and also visited our Paediatric Assessment Unit. These areas are often forgotten but Julie has been sharing the fun there too. Thank you for all our visits, they make such a difference."

SEPTEMBER visits resumed at Russell Hall Dudley, St Richard's Chichester, Nottingham Children's, King's College, Wigan General, Southend, and Watford General hospitals.

Magician Russ Stokes visited Russell Hall.

"Pod brings many smiles and laughter to our patients. Even our parents welcome the visits because they can see for themselves that how it makes a positive experience for the children when they are ill and feeling scared." (Play Specialist Julie)

Scott Thatcher (Silly Scott) visited St Richard's.

"Scott cheered up so many children thanks to our donors and the visit was a huge success, generating smiles and creating an amazing atmosphere for not just the children and young people, but their parents and the staff as well. One of the parents came to find Scott after the visit to express her thanks specially explaining that his magic and balloon making skills were the only thing that had made her son smile in the last 24 hours!" (Play Leader Kerry)



OCTOBER visits resumed at Peterborough City, Queen Elizabeth Woolwich, and Milton Keynes hospitals.

Magician Freddie Wilkinson visited Peterborough City Hospital.

"Our visit from Freddie at Peterborough City Hospital was incredible, all the children loved his magic and were pleasantly surprised to see a magician in the hospital. In particular, we had one boy who was informed about a visit from a magician earlier in the day, then when Freddie arrived, the boy was unfortunately having to undergo a procedure. He was in a lot of pain and feeling very upset. Freddie kindly offered to wait until he was finished with the procedure and then go back once it had finished. I asked the boy if he still wanted to see the magician and his face brightens, he was ever so excited to see the magician, Freddie. He was thoroughly entertained and loved every minute of it. His Mum said afterwards how it was exactly what he needed at that moment to distract him from everything else going on in the hospital. There were plenty more positive comments from all parents, staff and of course the children." (Play Specialist Georgia)



Entertainer Dov Citron (Captain Calamity) visited Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

"A huge amount of fun for all the children. The atmosphere was so good that staff came to join in. The magic tricks and balloon fun made everyone laugh. In fact, the laughter was heard in the surrounding areas. After a few difficult weeks, this was the medicine that we all needed." (Play Specialist Carol)

The following month magician Gordon Drayson visited, and Carol commented,

"Both Gordon's sessions were amazing but for different reasons. On Safari, he did one-one sessions, and a young person was amazed at how clever magic is. She tried to work out what was real magic and what was a trick and was left believing that magic is real (as it is) but that she helped to make it happen. On Dolphin Ward the atmosphere was completely different with young people joining in the fun and little ones also taking part. It was almost joyful chaos with so much laughter that doctors came into the waiting room to see what was happening. As we finished the session all parents applauded and children high fives Gordon. I think the best feedback we have had for ages is the parent who stayed after her appointment as her daughter had so much fun with the best ever magician and play specialist."

NOVEMBER visits resumed at Great Ormond Street, Worcester, Chelmsford and Basildon hospitals.

"Welcoming back our Pod entertainer has brought so much joy, laughter, and excitement. This makes such a difference to our children, young people, and their families." (Deputy Head Play Services Sian)

DECEMBER visits resumed at Basingstoke and Winchester hospitals. In addition, there were Christmas party visits at North Middlesex University, Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Oswestry, Doncaster Children's, and Bristol Children's hospitals. Hopefully these hospitals will also resume their monthly visits in 2023.

Entertainer David Oakley entertained at Oswestry and teacher Helen sent this message, *"It was so lovely to have David with us here on the ward yesterday and the children loved his magic show. He was brilliant at appealing to the different ages and abilities of the children watching. Now that some of our Covid restrictions have eased a little we would love to be able to reinstate our visit and I have spoken with David as he knows our ward very well. I explained that a Thursday would be a fabulous day to have him here on the ward as there is usually a children's dental clinic with quite a few anxious young patients who would certainly benefit from David's magical distractions!"*

There have been 460 Pod sessions in 2022. Thank you to all our generous donors for making the hospital journey a more positive one for lots of children in hospital this year, and one which can be remembered (at least partly) with a smile.

