

PLAYING WITH CHILDREN'S HEALTH?

A manifesto for children's play in healthcare

Being able to play is vital to children's health and wellbeing. For children in healthcare, play is their best protection against anxiety and trauma.

There is growing evidence that by reducing children's stress levels through play, they engage better in their care and treatment. Play professionals can make procedures quicker and more cost-effective by reducing the need for anaesthesia or sedation and improving recovery times.

Starlight wants politicians to promise children that government policy will support play as part of a happy, healthy childhood and protect children's play when they are sick and in hospital.

We want the next government to adopt a national plan for children's play in health and healthcare, to include:

- 1.** Health play services available 7 days a week, supported by an initial 1000 new health play professionals.
- 2.** New guidance and standards for health play services across the NHS.
- 3.** Training in play for all children's health professionals.
- 4.** Play integrated within the commissioning and design of all children's health services.

Finally, we want the government to create a new cabinet minister for children (not just education). This department should work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to provide a joint lead on children's play as an essential part of the government's long-term strategy for children's health and wellbeing.



www.starlight.org.uk