Brainbow, the UK’s first rehabilitation service for children with brain tumours

10 September 2013

The new service, called ‘Brainbow’, will be the first in the country available on the NHS when it goes live in a few weeks time.

Brainbow is the result of close collaboration between Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH) and Anna’s Hope, Camille’s Appeal and Tom’s Trust, all of whom have personal experience of having children with brain tumours.

Brain tumours are the biggest cancer killer of children in the UK and for those who survive their lives can be severely limited. Children treated for brain tumours have the greatest need for rehabilitation of all children treated for cancer. Currently 200 children in the region are being managed for brain tumours.

Brainbow will provide a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation, integrated alongside standard clinical care for children with brain tumours, something that was not possible before. A coordinated, specialist neuro-rehabilitation assessment will include physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and clinical psychology.

The service has received funding for three years initially. It will provide valuable evidence to support further work on the impact of neuro-rehabilitation on outcomes for children, an area of provision that is still in its infancy.

Brainbow will be based at Addenbrooke’s, which is the regional centre for the treatment of
children with brain and spinal cancers.

A young patient chose the name in a competition which took place on one of the hospital’s specialist cancer wards for children.

Brainbow will support children under 16 already being treated for brain tumours at Addenbrooke’s and those who will be newly-diagnosed from October 2013.

Dr Amos Burke, consultant paediatric oncologist at Addenbrooke’s, said: “By launching Brainbow we will be able to provide a more standardised and holistic care package to children with brain tumours in the region. We are very grateful for the support from these three charities and we hope we can develop the service further in the future.”

Robert Hughes from Anna’s Hope said: “Today marks the culmination of seven years’ fundraising and the exciting beginning of a pioneering new service that will contribute and make a positive difference to the lives of children with brain tumours.

“Following the funding of the ‘Anna’s Hope Specialist Nurse’ at Addenbrooke’s we are delighted to continue our collaboration with the hospital by supporting the Brainbow service through the funding of the ‘Anna’s Hope Therapy team’ which includes a physiotherapist, speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist.

“Anna’s Hope is also delighted to be partnering with Camille’s Appeal and Tom’s Trust; without them Brainbow would not be possible and we look forward to the service helping more children with brain tumours reach their full potential.”

Martin Shave from Camille’s Appeal said: “From the outset, Camille's Appeal's sole objective has been to help improve the lives of young children with a brain tumour. We are proud to be involved in project that plays such an important role in the patient's journey. We thank every one of our supporters for the pennies and pounds that have made this possible.”

Deborah Whiteley from Tom’s Trust said: “Everyone at Tom’s Trust has worked tirelessly to achieve this wonderful goal. We are incredibly proud to be part of the charitable partnership Brainbow. By coming together we will enable such a difference to be made for children with brain tumours and their families. This is not the end of our work but the beginning of changing these children’s lives and outcomes.”