

Play specialists study day is first in region

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Professionals from all over the country are expected to attend the event, organised by Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust paediatric day unit healthcare play specialist Gaby Catrisano and the Brainbow service.



Brainbow is a service provided by CUH, funded in partnership with independent charities – Anna’s Hope, Tom’s Trust and Joshua Tarrant Trust – providing a pioneering rehabilitation service in the East of England for all children with brain tumours.

The study day, called ‘Play: An essential part of the cancer journey for children’ will be held between 9.30am and 4.15pm on 13 September at the Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute in Robinson Way.

Brainbow specialists will lead on a number of sessions including ‘Managing children with sensory impairment’, ‘The Child with a brain tumour’, ‘Cancer therapy in children with pre-existing conditions’ and ‘Addressing trauma in children’s cancer therapy’.

In addition to learning best practice, the event will be a good opportunity to network and swap tips and techniques.

Healthcare play specialists use therapeutic play techniques to help young patients understand their condition, treatment and their impact on their life.

They work mainly in hospitals, hospices and clinics and organise activities to help patients

prepare for operations, clinical procedures and to discuss concerns.

They provide support to parents, carers and the wider family, including siblings, and offer advice on how they can use play to help their children make sense of what's happening to them.

The work is underpinned by a combination of theoretical knowledge and evidence-based practice, enabling healthcare play specialists to plan and evaluate therapeutic play programmes.

They are an important part of the caring team and will continue to be so, particularly as the Trust is preparing to build a new children's hospital with help of a £100m grant from the Department of Health. It will be the only dedicated children's hospital in the region.

Gaby said: "We have regional meetings twice a year which touch on a particular theme and an annual National Association of Healthcare Play Specialists conference, but I don't think there has ever been an official study day just for play specialists who work with oncology children. We are really looking forward to it."

Dr Amos Burke, a paediatric oncologist and clinical lead for the Paediatric Oncology service and Brainbow, said: "Healthcare Play Specialists are vital to all that we do in delivering world-class cancer care. Our invitation to play specialists in this region and further afield is 'please join us'. This is the first event of its kind and if it is a success we would like it to become an annual event nationally"