Summer 2026

# Pioneer

**Your update from Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity**

## The power of play issue

Meet Sky, who had a brain tumour at 15 months but has now started school

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GREAT ORMOND STREET HOSPITAL CHARITY APPEAL

BUILD IT. BEAT IT.

**Artist's impression of a sensory room in the new Children's Cancer Centre**

# Putting play at the centre of care

**Being in hospital can feel scary for many children. The new state-of-the-art Children's Cancer Centre at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) will put children and families at the centre of its design.**

The generosity of supporters like you is getting us closer to the fundraising target we need to hit for this ambitious build. That means closer to building a centre with bright, inspiring spaces for learning and fun, outdoor areas where children can spend time away from the ward and bedrooms big enough for families to rest and play together.

The new centre will also include specialist sensory rooms – calm, carefully designed spaces where children can relax, regulate their emotions and prepare for treatment. With gentle lighting, soothing sounds and sensory activities tailored to different needs, these rooms will be especially important for children who find hospital environments overwhelming, or who have additional communication or mobility needs.

The finished spaces will be a haven for children, filled with delights like bubble tubes, light panels, projectors and infinity tunnels, alongside soft flooring and comfortable seating. Most importantly, they will give children somewhere they can feel safe, calm and more like themselves during some of the toughest moments of treatment.



# Summer evenings staring up at the starry sky

**As the evenings get warmer and lazy weekend picnics can last until night falls, do you have someone you'd like to name a star for?**

The GOSH Charity Night Sky is a digital constellation full of shared memories – where every star is named after someone who was loved.

Each star can have its own message or picture, or simply a name to be known by, but every one becomes part of a lasting legacy of hope for the future.

**To create your star in memory of someone special, go to nightsky.gosh.org**

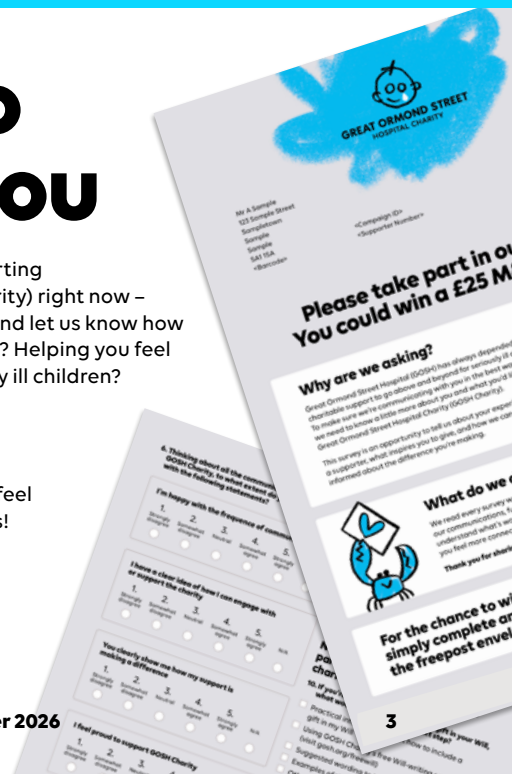
# We'd love to hear from you

We'd love to know how you're feeling about supporting Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity (GOSH Charity) right now – could you spare a few minutes to take our survey and let us know how we're doing? Are we sending you the right updates? Helping you feel inspired and confident that you're helping seriously ill children?

We have big ambitions to give seriously ill children childhoods that are fuller, funner and longer.

You're part of our community, and we want you to feel part of the plan – so please do share your thoughts!

**Please fill out the survey in your pack and send it back to us.**



# Saving childhood moments

**When Sky was diagnosed with a brain tumour as a toddler, her parents didn't know if she'd ever have a first day at school. Now, after treatment at GOSH, she's thriving.**

**Sky, aged six, with her dad, Benedict, and baby sister River**

Sky was around 15 months old when her parents, Benedict and Em, noticed something wasn't right. Instead of getting closer to walking, she seemed to be going backwards. Then she started losing her balance.

One day, while visiting her grandparents, Sky fell and seemed unable to support herself, so her parents took her to A&E.

"They did a CT scan and found an enormous mass," Benedict says. Doctors knew Sky had some kind of tumour, but she also had fluid on her brain that urgently needed draining. A few days later, she had a tumour resection and spent three weeks in intensive care.

Tests showed Sky had a fast-growing brain tumour called medulloblastoma. She was transferred to GOSH and began intensive treatment.

"She needed a specific type of chemotherapy, including one where it's directly injected into her brain," Benedict says.

"The whole year of her treatment, we managed to get two weekends at home together. One of those was Christmas, and the other was when Sky's little sister Bo was born. Bo spent her first six months being brought up in GOSH while we were there with Sky.

"Obviously we went through some pretty horrendous times, but it was made so much better by the amazing people. I can't praise our Clinical Nurse Specialist, Nikki, enough. I have memories of Sky chatting away while Nikki rocked Bo to sleep. She literally kept us going."

## The power of play

Claire and Jennie from the Play team were important to the family's experience too. "Sky had an Ommaya reservoir put into her head, an opening for the chemo to go into her brain. But at first, it could take 45 minutes to get the needle into it. Without the Play team it would've been impossible. They played games, held up screens, sang songs, all sorts. They had a rapport with Sky instantly. I'd never have appreciated it before our time at GOSH, but they were integral to our care. It's a vital service."

**Sky with Play Specialist Claire**

"Sky wasn't allowed in the playrooms because of infection control. But the Play team would come to her. It lightened the mood in the room when we were down, and gave us a break."

Sky finished her cancer treatment in May 2022, but she'll have follow-up care until she's at least 16. Now six, Sky is making lots of friends at school and walking (even if she's a still a bit wobbly sometimes).

"Where she's come from to where she is now is incredible," Benedict says. "We often think about families going through what we have. It's good to know there'll be an incredible new Children's Cancer Centre for them."

**Visit gosh.org/new-home to make a donation and help give more children like Sky the best chance and the best childhood possible**

# Why I support the charity

**As a child recovering from surgery at GOSH, Dr Sharon Ann Holgate discovered a love of science writing and broadcasting that would shape her career. Today, she's leaving a gift in her Will to help give more seriously ill children the chance to build futures of their own.**

As a baby, I had an operation at GOSH that saved my life. I have a very rare form of spina bifida and a double curvature of the spine, and I'm only alive today because of pioneering surgery by GOSH neurosurgeon Mr Kenneth Till.

I needed treatment over the course of my childhood, during the 1970s and '80s. The two operations I had when I was 12 meant I missed a year of school in total. However, the second of those hospital stays would end up sowing the seeds for my future career.

The teachers at GOSH came around the ward asking if anyone was struggling with any school work and wanted any extra tuition. I felt too grim to take lessons at the time, but because I liked science and writing they encouraged me to write some popular science articles for the in-house GOSH kids' magazine.

**An article Sharon wrote as a GOSH patient in the 1980s**

The night before my operation, I was so anxious I couldn't sleep. So instead, I researched and wrote, papers strewn over my bed. I remember sending away the nurses who were trying to give me pre-op meds the next morning, because I wanted to finish my articles first.

I also had my first experience of radio broadcasting on GOSH Radio. The presenters encouraged me and years later I still have my recording from GOSH Radio, sitting alongside the recordings of my BBC World Service pieces and the two documentaries I've so far written and presented for BBC Radio 4.

## Giving a gift, sharing the joy

I'm sharing my story because when I was younger, I never saw anyone with a disability like mine succeeding, and I want GOSH patients and their families today to know they're not alone and that we can achieve things in life. Missing school because of treatment doesn't have to hold you back.

I caught up without any extra tuition and went on to get a doctorate in physics. Now, I'm an established broadcaster and writer published in titles including *New Scientist*, *The Times Literary Supplement* and *Physics World*. I've authored seven books and am delighted to have received multiple awards for my work.

Not only did GOSH save my life and keep me walking, it also helped me take the first steps on my career path. I'm leaving a gift in my Will to GOSH Charity to help fund the sort of breakthrough treatments that saved my life, and the type of support that encouraged me to succeed. And I hope I might inspire others to leave their own legacy this way, too.

**To learn more about leaving a gift in your Will to GOSH Charity, visit gosh.org/legacy**

# Play our Summer Raffle

Tickets **£1** each

## Sun's out, fun's out!

Enter by 4 September to help make hospital a bit less hard for seriously ill kids this summer and be in with a chance of winning an amazing **£10,000**!

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in our Spring Raffle earlier this year. We raised an amazing £195,000 for the hospital, which will help give seriously ill children the best chance and the best childhood possible. Congratulations to all our lucky winners!

**To play today, scan the QR code or head to raffle.gosh.org**

**GOSH Charity Summer Raffle**

The last date we can accept your entry is 4 September 2026, and we'll draw the prize winners on 11 September 2026.

The raffle is only open to residents of Great Britain, and tickets must not be sold to or by any person under 18 years of age.

Terms and conditions can be found at **raffle.gosh.org/rules**

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