

Spring /Summer 26

Northamptonshire  
Health Charity

# The heart

Our community in action

# A heartfelt thank you

At Northamptonshire Health Charity, we are constantly inspired by the kindness and generosity of our supporters.

Whether you've fundraised, donated, volunteered, or simply spread the word, your efforts are helping us transform our local NHS into the very best it can be. Thank you, from all of us.

**Last financial year your donations helped fund over £880,000 of improvements to patient care for our local NHS.**



## What's inside

Pg 3-6

### The power of play

Why play matters for children in hospital

Pg 7

### From the archives

A glimpse into our past and the care that continues today

Pg 8-9

### Women's health

Care, comfort and support beyond treatment

Pg 10-11

### Aaron's story

Running the London Marathon for what matters most

Pg 12-13

### The heart of our hospitals

Supporters making a difference every day

Pg 14

### Businesses making a difference

Local partners supporting patients and staff

Pg 15

### Your challenges change lives

Take on a challenge and help change lives



## The power of play

For children like Josh, healing isn't just about medicine. It's also about play, connection and the spaces that help them feel included during long stays away from home.

Born prematurely at just 31 weeks, Josh now lives with cerebral palsy, epilepsy and severe scoliosis. He uses a wheelchair and has spent much of his childhood at Northampton General Hospital.

But one thing has always helped hospital feel a little brighter - his Play Team.

For more than 14 years, the Play Specialists have been part of Josh's life.

They know his personality, his sense of humour and the little things that make him laugh.

**"They're his people, Josh absolutely loves them."**

Jo, Josh's mum

Jo adds, "There's one who comes in and he pretends to make her feel sick," Jo laughs. "And another one, he hears her voice before she even walks in the room and you can see he knows exactly who it is."

**It's a bond built over years of trust and care.**

For Jo, it means she knows Josh is surrounded by people who truly understand him.

**"I used to stay day and night with him, but now I know he's safe with them." Jo**





Josh loves the outdoors, come with him as he heads to the playground



## Why play matters

Hospital can be a lonely place for any child. For Josh, the Play Team brings connection, laughter and a chance to feel like himself.

Their impact became even clearer recently when Josh had to isolate and the Play Team were unable to visit him.

“He became really unhappy. They said he might be getting depressed”, Jo remembers.

Moments like these show how important play and interaction can be for children who spend long periods in hospital.

**But when play spaces are not designed for everyone, children like Josh can easily miss out.**

## A play area for every child

While Northampton General Hospital does have an outdoor play area, Josh, and other children with access needs, are limited to how they can access the space.

“There are steps, narrow spaces and things he just can’t access,” Jo explains. “I do feel like he gets excluded at times, and that’s hard.”

**“Josh spends more time in hospital than he does at home, so to have somewhere he can go outside, feel comfortable and be part of things, that means everything.” Jo**

Thanks to your donations, Northamptonshire Health Charity is working to transform the hospital’s



The playground ready for a revamp



Josh and Mum, Jo

outdoor play area into a colourful and welcoming place. We want to make sure children of all abilities, who are in our hospital can enjoy this space.

Plans include better wheelchair access, sensory play elements, shaded areas, places for older children to hang out and more room for children to explore and interact together.

For children spending long periods in hospital, spaces like this a can make a difficult day brighter.



## We are so close

For Jo, the thought of a new play area is incredibly exciting.

After years of watching Josh spend so much time in hospital, she hopes the new space will give him something to look forward to.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, plans for the new play area are already well underway, with works due to start this summer.

**But we are not quite there yet.**

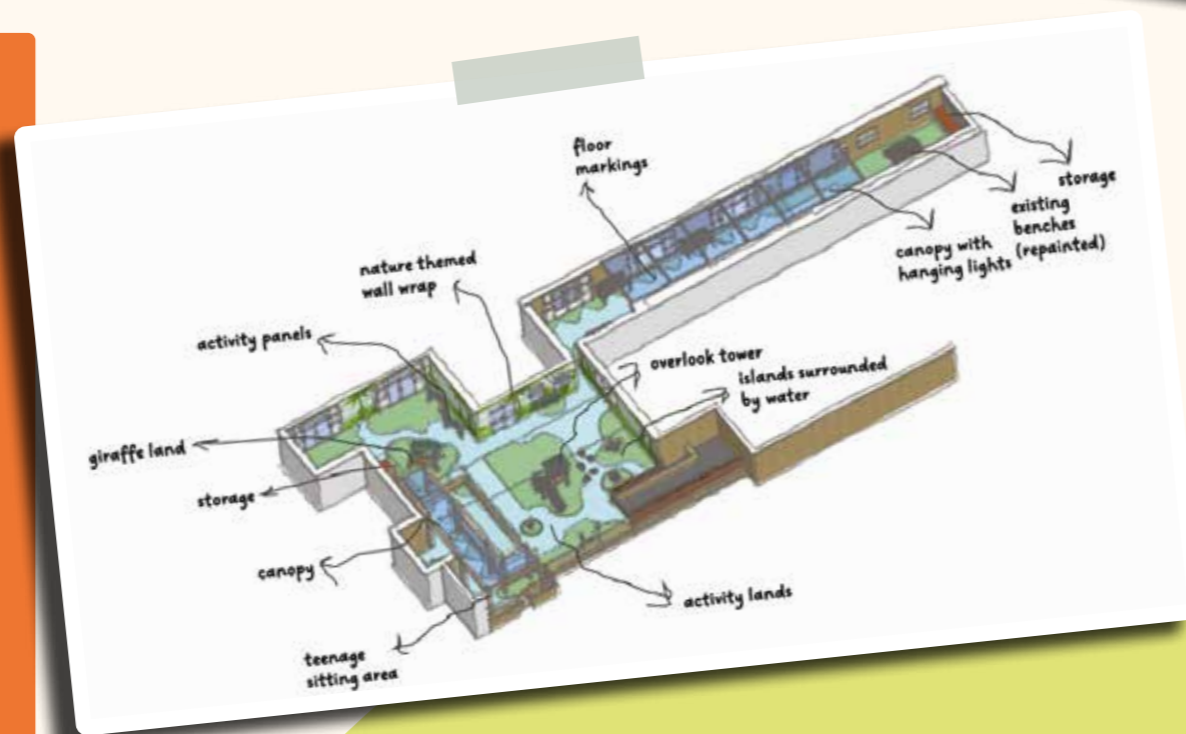
## Help bring this space to life

We are so very close to reaching our goal to begin work on this incredible project.

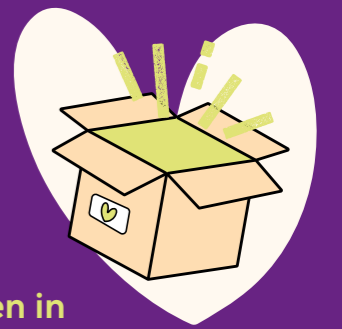
**£192,504.95  
raised so far!**

But we need to raise £275,000 to see this project come to life. Soon, this space could become a reality for children like Josh. A place where they can get outside, laugh with the Play Team and simply enjoy being children.

If you'd like to help make this and other wonderful projects possible, scan the QR code below or visit [nhcharity.co.uk/play](http://nhcharity.co.uk/play)



## From the archives



**Improving the lives of children in our community is part of our history.**

Records show that between 1744 and 1801 more than 4,200 children were treated at the original Northampton Infirmary. (You can find out more on the link at the end of the article).

This was long before specialist children's hospitals existed. Even then, doctors understood how important specialist care was for young patients.

### How do we know this?

Tucked away inside Northampton General Hospital is a small museum and archive. It holds old medical tools, handwritten patient records and photographs of staff and wards from years gone by. Together, they tell the rich story of healthcare in our community.

One thing becomes clear when you start exploring the archives. Caring for children has always mattered here.

Today that commitment continues.

**In future issues of The Heart, we hope to share some of these fascinating stories and discoveries with you.**

If you'd like to explore more of these stories, the museum and archives are open to visitors on Wednesday mornings.

It's a chance to see these pieces of history up close, and to discover more about the care that has shaped our hospitals over time. The team are also always looking for volunteers, so if you're curious and would like to get involved, it's a great place to start.

**You can find out more at [nhcharity.co.uk/archive](http://nhcharity.co.uk/archive)**

# Putting the care into women's health

Spending time in hospital can often be one of the most vulnerable moments in someone's life.

How safe and cared for you feel in the space and by staff has a massive impact on your experience.

For women, these moments can carry a different weight. Thanks to the generosity of people in our community, we've been able to fund changes that make a real difference at exactly these times.



## Where it all begins

For some women, their first major experience of a hospital is in a maternity ward.

Giving birth comes with so many complexities and possibilities. It's important for every woman, when they enter that space, to feel safe in the hands of their care team and the hospital itself.

How a space feels can shape the whole experience. That's why small changes matter.

**"We see it straight away. When the room feels more relaxed, women are more able to feel in control of what's happening."**

Devon, Midwife

Thanks to your donations, teams have been able to introduce changes across maternity spaces, that help create environments that feel more personal and more centred around each woman's experience.

Soft lighting, sensory projections and calming wall art help create a space that feels less clinical and more supportive.

Simple equipment like birthing stools and specialised exercise balls give women the freedom to move and find positions that feel right for them.

These aren't big, dramatic interventions. But they can help reduce anxiety and support women when it really matters.

## Recovery is more than survival

For women coming out the other side of cancer therapy, the future can feel like another step into the unknown.

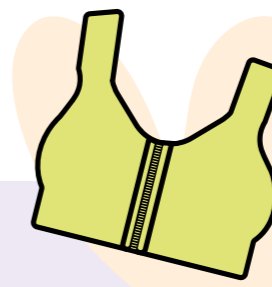
Recovery isn't always straightforward. It's learning to live in your body again.

It's the discomfort that lingers when you try to rest. The awareness of your body feeling different. The quiet worry about how things look, or what other people might notice.

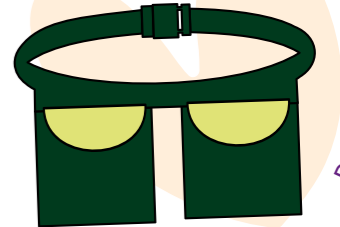
That's where small, practical things can make a real difference.

Mastectomy pillows, post-operative bras and drain bags don't change the diagnosis, but they can ease pain, support movement and help women feel less exposed at a time when confidence can be fragile.

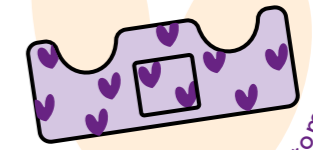
With your help, we are able to add these little touches of care in our hospitals, helping recovery feel a little more manageable for women across our community.



Post-operative bra



Drain bags



Mastectomy pillow

## When words aren't enough

There are moments in healthcare when families are faced with loss. Moments that are difficult to process, and even harder to put into words. In those situations, there isn't always a right thing to say. But there are ways to show care.

Memory boxes and keepsakes can offer something to hold onto when everything else feels uncertain. For children and families, these small, thoughtful items can become a way to stay connected and begin to process what's happened.

We are proud to be able to offer these small gestures, helping in some small way to support families facing their hardest moments.





# Running for Avery and Rosemary

When Aaron lined up at the start of the London Marathon this year, he wasn't just running for the challenge. He was running for his daughters.

In 2023, Aaron and his partner Katy welcomed twin girls, Avery and Rosemary. But the girls arrived three months early, at just 27 weeks.

Instead of taking their babies home, the family spent the next three months on the Gosset Neonatal Unit at Northampton General Hospital.

**"It was a shock at first, then you go into survival mode."** Aaron

For three months, hospital life became the family's routine. Aaron would go to work, then head straight to the hospital. Evenings were spent by the girls' incubators before returning home to sleep.

"We used to call ourselves part time parents," he says. "The support from staff on the unit made a huge difference."

"They were teaching us how to be parents really," Aaron says. "Skin to skin contact was really important. Reading to them, singing to them. They helped us learn everything."

The family spent so much time on the ward that the nurses became part of their journey.

**"We'll never forget them, we still talk about them now."** Aaron

After three months, the twins were finally strong enough to go home. Avery still needed oxygen for a while, and the family continued to receive support from community healthcare teams.

**Today, the girls are thriving**

"Considering how early they were, we've been very lucky," Aaron says.

That experience is the reason Aaron decided to take on the London Marathon for Northamptonshire Health Charity.

Training for the 26.2 miles meant early mornings, long runs and pushing through tough weather. "I'm a bit of an all or nothing character," Aaron says. "If I'm doing something, I'm all in!"

The long runs were tough, especially when you are out for hours on your own. But Aaron knew exactly why he was doing it. "We just wanted to give something back," he says.

**For families on neonatal wards, small things can make a big difference**

Comfortable chairs for parents, support for staff and equipment that helps make long days and nights a little easier.

"If I could raise some money that helps make life a little bit nicer for parents on the ward," Aaron says, "then it's worth it."

**Running for families like his**

Every mile Aaron ran was a way of saying thank you to the staff who cared for his daughters and supported his family during a frightening and uncertain time.

For families arriving on neonatal wards today, that same care and support can make all the difference.

By taking on the London Marathon, Aaron hopes to help make those difficult days a little easier for other parents and babies who need it most.

Thank you Aaron!



## Inspired by Aaron?

Taking on a challenge like the London Marathon is a powerful way to support Northamptonshire Health Charity. But it doesn't have to be 26.2 miles.

Every year, incredible supporters run races, climb mountains, host events or take on personal challenges to raise funds for our hospitals.

However you choose to get involved, your support helps make a real difference for patients, families and staff across Northamptonshire.

[nhcharity.co.uk/events](https://nhcharity.co.uk/events)



Dad's cheeky cheerleaders



Aaron preparing for the big day

# You The heart of our hospitals

Every day, people across Northamptonshire go above and beyond to support our local hospitals. Whether it's taking on personal challenges, hosting community events and bake sales, these fundraisers make an incredible difference to patients, their families and our wonderful NHS staff.



**Total raised for Twinkling Stars appeal £3,000!**



## A night of laughter and love

A special comedy night brought people together for an evening filled with laughter, warmth and reflection, all in memory of baby Beatrix.

Held at The Bedford in Balham, the event featured a fantastic line-up of well-known comedians, including Nish Kumar, Harriet Kemsley, Andrew Bird and Daniel Kitson, who generously gave their time to support the cause.

Organised by Bea's uncle, Ross, the night marked what would have been Bea's fifth birthday. Friends, family and supporters came together to celebrate her life and raise vital funds for the Twinkling Stars Appeal.

The evening raised over £3,000, helping towards a dedicated bereavement space where families can have privacy, dignity and time together during the most difficult moments.



Have you ever thought about setting up a fund in honour of someone special? Find out more about Tribute Funds visit [nhcharity.co.uk/tribute](http://nhcharity.co.uk/tribute) or scan the QR code:



## A tree full of life

We're creating a Tree of Celebration at our hospital sites, offering a meaningful way to honour someone special.

Supporters will be able to dedicate a leaf in their name, each one carefully engraved to create a lasting tribute.

It's a simple way to celebrate the people who matter most, while helping create something beautiful within our hospitals. A tree that grows with the stories and memories it holds, bringing warmth, comfort and a more human touch to those spending time there.

## A gift that is changing care

A generous supporter has made a remarkable £20,000 donation in memory of her husband, who was cared for at Northampton General Hospital.

While she wishes to remain anonymous, her gift is already making a real difference to patients and staff every day.

Her donation funded a specialist piece of equipment, the LumenEye system, a small camera used during appointments to help doctors carry out internal checks more quickly and comfortably. It means many patients can get answers sooner, often with fewer follow-up procedures.

It's a powerful example of how one act of generosity can improve care, not just once, but for every patient who benefits from it in the years to come.



# Businesses backing our hospitals

Local businesses and organisations continue to play a vital role in supporting our hospitals. Through partnerships, events and fundraising, their support is helping to fund projects that improve care for patients and families across Northamptonshire.



## Big Tractors, BIGGER Hearts!

The Mowerman Tractor Run raised an amazing £12,000, shared between Northamptonshire Health Charity and the Northampton Saints Foundation. Thank you to everyone who made it happen!



## Full speed ahead

Staff at Aston Martin Aramco Formula One™ Team have been supporting our appeals, helping us build momentum for the year ahead. Their energy and commitment are helping drive real impact across our hospitals.



## A hole in one partnership

We're thrilled to be the chosen charity of Collingtree Park Golf Club. We start with the Senior Pairs Open Golf Day in April and can't wait to 'swing' into a brilliant year together!

If you'd like to get your business involved in supporting Northamptonshire Health Charity, please phone **01604 626927** or email **greenheart@nhcharity.co.uk**

## Big Prizes, Big Smiles!

A huge thank you to Northampton's own Equitech and RCI Europe Kettering for supercharging our Raffle of Joy with amazing prizes. Equitech kindly sponsored the Raffle of Joy and RCI provided the 3rd prize.

Last year's raffle featured an incredible £2,500 cash first prize, £1,000 second prize, and a seven-night self-catering holiday plus £250 cash as the third prize.

Thanks to both sponsors for helping us spread joy and raise vital funds once again!



## Raising the bar

T&W Civil Engineering raised an incredible £20,000 through their annual Charity Golf Day.

Their support has helped fund a dedicated maternity bereavement suite, creating a more private and compassionate space for families during difficult times.

# Your challenges change lives

We have amazing events taking place all year round. From adrenaline action to fun runs and more!

**Abseil** All year round

**Skydive** All year round

**Jurassic Coast Ultra Challenge** Spring  
16th - 17th May

**Tough Mudder Midlands 5k or 15k** Summer  
4th - 5th July

**South Downs Challenge 2026** Summer  
15th August

**24 Peaks Challenge** Autumn  
11th - 13th September

**Great North Run 2026** Autumn  
13th September

**Amazing Northampton Run** Autumn  
13th September

**London to Paris 3 Day Cycle** Autumn  
23rd - 26th September

**Robin Hood Half Marathon** Autumn  
27th September

**Your adventure starts here**

For more information scan the QR code or visit [NHCharity.co.uk/events](https://NHCharity.co.uk/events)



# Little things. BIG difference.

Every day, supporters like you help create the moments, spaces and support that go beyond medicine.

**Donate today to give a gift of:**

**Comfort**

**£25**

Could provide comfort items for patients and families during difficult moments

**Calm**

**£40**

Could go towards equipment that helps create calmer, more supportive sensory environments

**Support**

**£75**

Could purchase specialist items that support women recovering after surgery

**Joy**

**£150**

Could buy play equipment that helps children feel like children again

**Donate today**



**Northamptonshire  
Health Charity**

**NHS**  
University Hospitals  
of Northamptonshire  
NHS Group

**NHS**  
Northamptonshire  
Healthcare  
NHS Foundation Trust

**Address:** Northamptonshire Health Charity, Springfield, Cliftonville, NN1 5BE **Tel:** 01604 626927.  
**Email:** greenheart@nhcharity.co.uk Registered in England and Wales, charity no: 1165702

