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ReadWell ? providing books to make life better for children in hospital

Books for Keeps readers will be aware of Readathon, the charity which has successfully motivated millions of UK schoolchildren to read for enjoyment whilst raising over £23 million for sick children. Now the team behind it have a new project.

Books, important for all children, play an especially vital role for children in hospital. They help young patients, their siblings and visitors to readjust to a new and often distressing environment. Every major hospital in the UK has its own school to provide education for any child who is in hospital for 5 days or more (consecutively or over time). These hospital schools are some of the biggest and most challenged schools in the country serving the 100,000's of children who are hospitalised every year ? Birmingham hospital school for example has over 200 teachers and works with over 600 children each day. Brough Girling of Readathon discovered that the provision of books in children's hospitals was woefully lacking, and set out to change things for the better.

Readwell aims to give new books to children in hospital on a regular basis. It works with hospital schools to provide tailor-made book trolleys which are scheduled to visit all wards, and stocked with 100 carefully selected new books every month. In addition, each hospital receives a regular visit from an experienced, professional storyteller.

The benefits of books in hospital are numerous: they offer distraction, relieve the boredom, help children keep up with school work, and provide children and their visitors with a form of escape.

Children who particularly benefit from ReadWell include patients at high risk of infection - for example burns victims, chemotherapy and transplant patients, who can read only new books because of their susceptibility to infection.

ReadWell is currently in three hospitals ? Bristol, Birmingham and Oxford's John Radcliffe. The ReadWell team is delighted to have secured funding for a further five hospitals, and is confident that they will attain their goal to reach 30 major hospitals across the UK by 2015. The ReadWell team continues to actively seek support to help achieve this goal from a wide variety of sources including the book trade, which has been overwhelmingly supportive of ReadWell to date.

For more information visit www.readwell.org.uk [2] or call them on 0845 606 1151

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