

Reads and Rhymes Together

A book-gifting programme with Children's Books Ireland and Childrens Health Ireland (CHI) Arts in Health



Reads and Rhymes Together - Creating Communities of Readers in CHI

Reads and Rhymes Together is a Children's Health Ireland (CHI) wide initiative in partnership with Children's Books Ireland, which seeks to create communities of readers in CHI.

We know that parent and guardian-led reading in hospital forms important connections in simple but meaningful ways, and together, we want to inspire a culture of reading for joy across the paediatric healthcare setting, encouraging patients and families to spend time together within the pages of a book.

Piloted in 2022, this programme has grown every year



2022

Launch of programme

In 2022, this book-gifting initiative was first introduced as Little Reads and Rhymes as it focused on gifting books to children in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit in Crumlin.

The initiative was inspired by children's author and poet Deirdre Sullivan, who recognised a gap in promoting closeness with children while in PICU.

With the support of CHI, Children's Books Ireland provided books and sensory packs tailored for infant patients and their families.

Key Elements

- Parent/Carer Survey
- 5 Titles

465 Books to two wards/units (PICU)

A Chara,

When my child was in Crumlin, books gave us both a great sense of safety. I held her hand and, between the whirr of the machines, the murmur of voices, I read her books.

I'm going to suggest some small sensory activities to accompany your gifted book that your child might like. The rhythm of your voice and the touch of your hand can help to forge connection and reduce stress. For you and your child.

Warmest wishes,

Deirdre Sullivan



2023

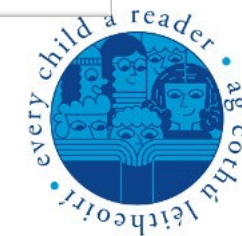
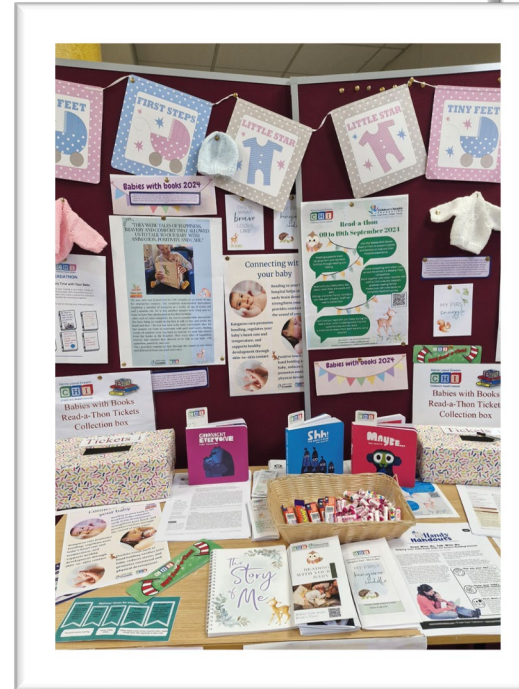
Expansion of Little Reads and Rhymes

In 2023, the initiative was then extended across the hospital, to include the Children's Heart Centre, the Transitional Care Unit and the Neonatal ward and books were also provided to Play Departments in CHI at Tallaght, and Temple Street.

Key Elements

- Consultation with key staff members
- Staff Survey of PICU Staff before extending the programme
- Much larger range of titles- increasing from 6 to 30, covering ages 0 to YA

975 Books to 7 wards/units across 3 locations



2024

Rebranding and further expansion of the programme

Key Elements

- Commissioned Illustrator Jennifer Farley to design a poster that would capture the range of people, children and young people in CHI
- Engaged a Champion of Reading (an author or illustrator working in children's books whose role is to champion reading for joy through a series of workshop) Author Eve McDonnell, who visited the hospital a number of times over the summer
- Produced a video, documenting the programme
- Held Info Days in the hospital to engage with staff, carers and patients and do in person book-gifting

636 Books to 6 wards/units



2025

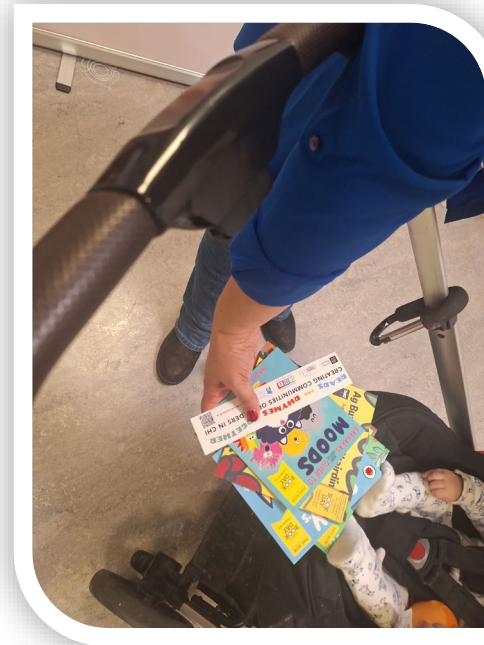
Further development and expansion

Key Elements

- Info sessions for staff online
- More in person Info days
- Designing an info leaflet for parents/carers and their children/young people
- More visits from the Champion of Reading, Eve McDonnell, over the summer
- Expanding visits to other CHI hospitals
- Guest artist visits
- Working with the hospital schools in 2 of the hospital settings

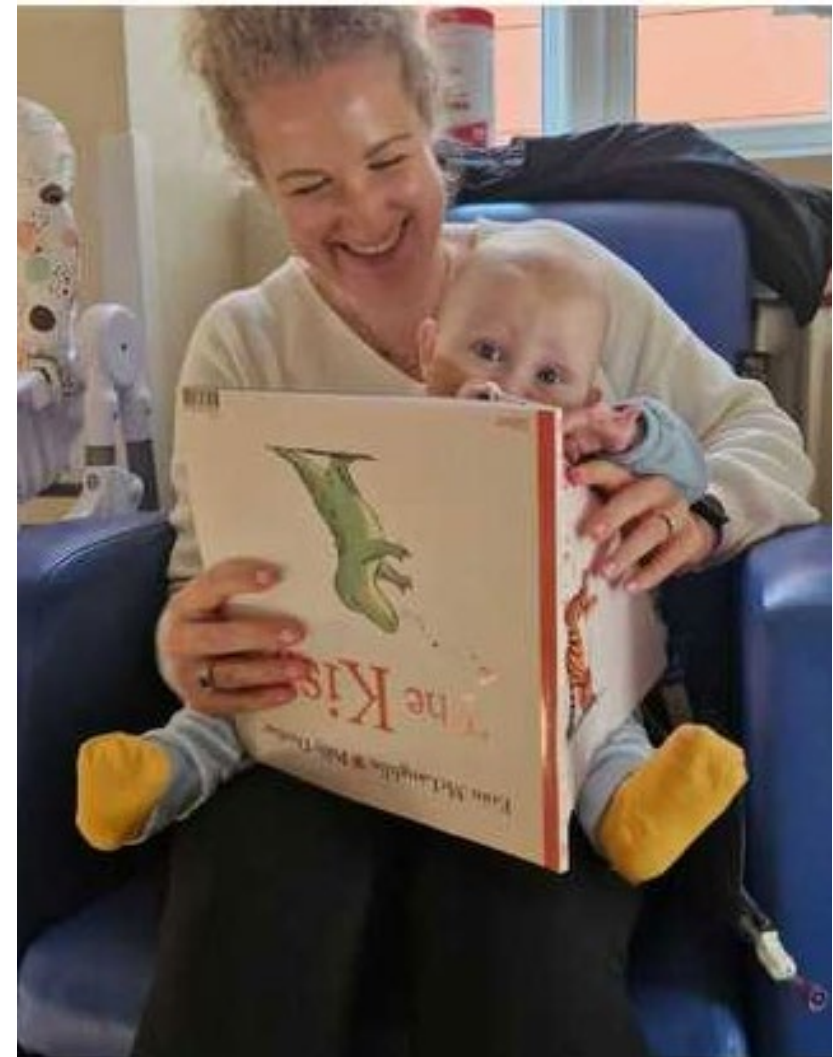
Most importantly, getting more books into the hands of more children!

Plan to gift approx. 900 books to 12 wards/units across 3 locations



Baby Arlo and Mum Linda

“After each of Arlo’s surgeries, he was in considerable discomfort. The best thing we could do for him is talk to him and stroke his hand and face - he was too sore to be held. Particularly after his last surgery we were so overcome with grief and worry, finding words of comfort were too hard so instead we read him stories from the books at the hospital. They were tales of happiness, bravery and comfort that allowed us to talk to our baby with animation, positivity and care. They provided comfort to him through the sound of our voices and distracted from our grief and worry.”

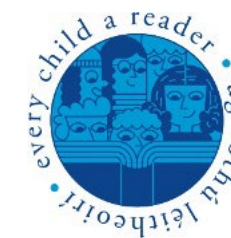


What we have learnt

- Important to be adaptable, finding ways to work around the hospital's processes without impacting on the very important work they do
- Accept that growth and progress can be slow, sometimes painstakingly so.
- Recognising key staff members that will become advocates for the programme
- Understanding how the staff work, and what are the best ways to keep them up to date and informed
- Taking on board feedback from staff, and engaging with them when suitable
- Learning to trust in another organisation to gift the books, as, most of the time, we cannot do this
- Recognising that the wins can be small, and we may not witness them, but they are massively impactful.



All at a time when CHI is under great pressure as a state body...



The Future- the new Children's Hospital

How to position Reads and Rhymes Together as all the Dublin children's hospitals come together under one roof

READS AND RHYMES TOGETHER
CREATING COMMUNITIES OF READERS IN CHI



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LATEST | New national children's hospital completion delayed again with June date to be missed

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By **Fergal Bowers**
Health Correspondent

The stream of controversies surrounding Children's Health Ireland (CHI) have placed the spotlight on the body which is charged with governing and operating the three paediatric hospitals in Dublin - Temple Street, Crumlin and the National Children's Hospital at Tallaght.

The events of recent months have shocked parents, the public and the political system.

A series of damning reports, the resignation of CHI's chairperson and four board members recently, plus several changes in the senior management, has placed a question mark over its future.

With further review reports to be published, more damaging revelations are expected.

Is CHI capable of managing the largest transformation project in the history of Irish healthcare, with the move to the new National Children's Hospital?

HOME PAGE / NEWS

Strain of merging three children's hospitals a factor in Children's Health Ireland crisis, says Hiqa

The planned merger into the new children's hospital was described as 'probably the biggest change management project in the entire country at this time'. File photo: Leah Farrell / © RollingNews.ie

WED, 09 APR, 2025 - 17:56
NIAMH GRIFFIN



Baby Aoife and Mum



The Future of Reads and Rhymes Together, as we continue to create Communities of Readers in CHI

‘In a hospital room, where reality can feel surreal, there is something spellbinding about the connection that unfolds at the turn of a page or with the rhythm of a rhyme. When you share stories with young patients and their families, you are opening far more than a book - you are opening hearts. To hope. To each other. To empathy. And sometimes, whether among mermaids and dragons or on distant planets, they get to experience, if only for a moment, their greatest wish: a sense of normality.’

Eve McDonnell, Author and Champion of Reading for Reads and Rhymes Together

