

# HELP ILL CHILDREN COPE WITH HOSPITAL

By SARAH CURRAN

**A MUM has praised volunteer charity group Children in Hospital for making her autistic son's regular visits to the clinic less distressing.**

Joyce Rubotham, 41, from Clontarf, Dublin, is mother to 11-year-old Carl and Emma, eight.

As well as Carl's autism, both children suffer with severe asthma and have been in and out of hospital their whole lives due to the resulting complications.

Owing to frequent visits to Temple Street Children's Hospital, they dreaded the cramped, overcrowded waiting room where they would sometimes be forced to sit on the floor.

Joyce said: "We would be in and out of Temple Street for various problems, particularly the eye clinic."

"Both of my children are asthmatic, so they have a lot of chest problems."

"We had grommets (tiny tubes placed in an eardrum to help pressure-equalisation) put in four times between the two of them. They also suffered with hearing problems related to asthma, which resulted in speech delays."

"The outpatient clinics are pretty awful, you could be hanging around there for hours without any idea of when you're going to be seen. It's especially exhausting for young children. It's crowded with no natural

# All kids just want to play & have fun



FAMILY  
Joyce,  
Carl and  
Emma



## How you can be a volunteer

CHILDREN in Hospital are looking for people to hold a cuppa and cookie morning to raise vital funds.

The charity wants to highlight their cause this National Volunteer Week, which kicked off yesterday. CIH is hoping both businesses and individuals will host a coffee morning on their behalf.

To register for a starter pack please email [info@childreninhospital.ie](mailto:info@childreninhospital.ie) or visit [childreninhospital.ie](http://childreninhospital.ie).

light and no fresh air. Kids of all ages are just bundled into one small area."

And for Carl, they can be especially daunting place.

The mum added: "Temple Street isn't purpose built, it's a Georgian house, not a hospital. It's very difficult for anyone – but particularly for a child with sensory issues like my son."

"The halls are narrow and the ceilings are low, and the noise affects him a lot. I remember sitting on the

floor in the outpatients room with both of my children.

"There was a little boy who was more severe on the autism scale than my son who was sitting beside us on the floor rocking. It was just so upsetting."

But everything changed when Joyce and her family met Children in Hospital.

The charity provides volunteers who play with children in waiting rooms and on wards in Irish hospitals.

Joyce said: "The services

of CIH just changed the whole atmosphere. The nurses do their best, but they're focusing on keeping the hospital running. The doctors are busier again. They don't have time to even introduce themselves."

"The volunteers in the waiting room made a huge difference to our experience."

"They had equipment there, they play with them, produce colouring pages, and crayons and Lego and stuff." She added: "It

just really made a difference to our experience."

Joyce was so impressed by the service CIH provides she decided to become a volunteer herself. Although she had no experience working with children, CIH gave her the skills she needed.

She said: "The training programme was really brilliant. I had been out of work myself for a few years at that stage, it was nice to get back into something. I'm a molecular biologist,

but we have a lot of retired teachers, students and a whole range of people who want to volunteer."

Joyce said she has gained a huge amount from volunteering, adding: "The children are fabulous. They're just so resilient."

"They come into the playroom and you can tell they have been through a lot."

"They forget themselves once they get into a game of Snakes and Ladders. It's very rewarding."

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