

Spread a Smile Therapeutic Entertainment Programme

Improving well-being and supporting positive mental health in paediatric patients and their families

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OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the psychosocial impact of the Spread a Smile therapeutic entertainment programme on patients, families and healthcare professionals.

Play is an essential part of childhood and is believed to be critical for children to learn, cope with anxiety and make sense of their emotions (1). There is evidence showing the value of children's play, particularly the benefits on cognitive, social and emotional development (2). Play and recreation opportunities are critical for children and young people in healthcare settings. However, research illustrates that children with illness or chronic health conditions who experience treatment and hospitalization have fewer opportunities to play, which may hinder development and place them at a greater risk for social problems and poor mental health compared to their healthy peers (3).

Spread a Smile is a registered UK charity that provides in-person and virtual therapeutic entertainment to paediatric patients and their families in hospital and at home. The entertainers work alongside clinical teams to provide holistic care and support above and beyond the provision of the NHS.



METHODS

Questionnaires measuring the impact of our work:

- Paediatric patients aged 0-18 (n=405), parents, carers (n=107) and healthcare professionals (n=77).
- Questionnaires were adapted to reflect differences in patient ages and/or abilities.

RESULTS

- 95% of paediatric patients felt happy after a visit from a Spread a Smile entertainer compared to 14% before a visit.
- 98% of paediatric patients surveyed said that Spread a Smile visits improved their stay in hospital.
- 100% of healthcare professionals said that Spread a Smile visits improved the emotional well-being and mental health of patients.
- Respondents reported our visits helped to reduce pain and anxiety, boost confidence and self-esteem, make the hospital environment less frightening and enhance the overall mood on the ward.

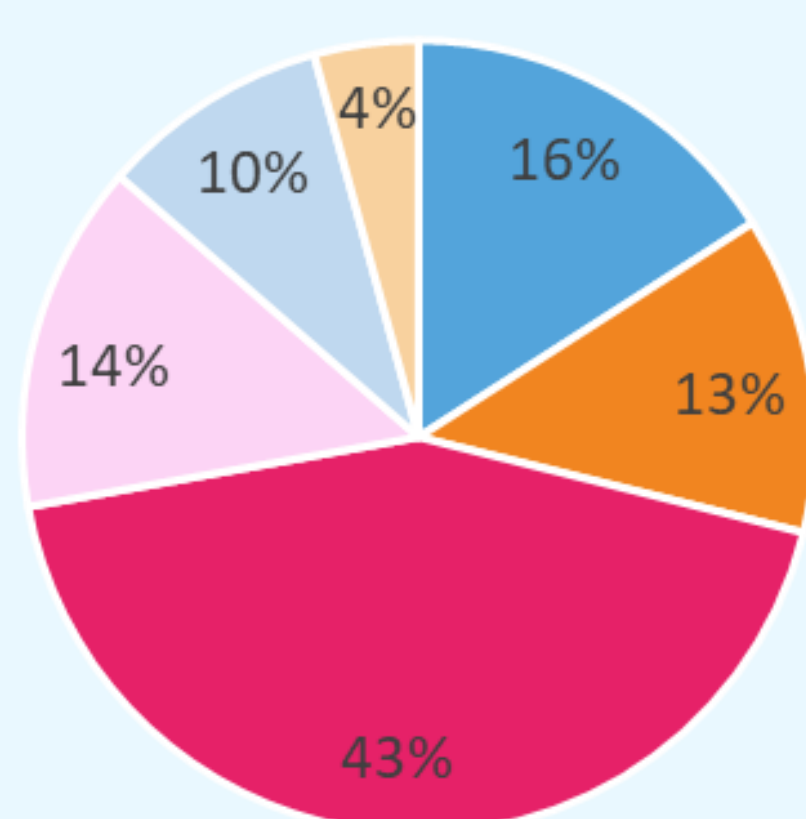
CONCLUSION

Initial data suggests that Spread a Smile's therapeutic entertainment programme has a positive effect on paediatric patient mental health and well-being. Visits appear to improve mood and the overall experience for a child or young person with a serious illness spending time in hospital.

Our services add value to an overstretched NHS to support play specialists and other healthcare professionals.

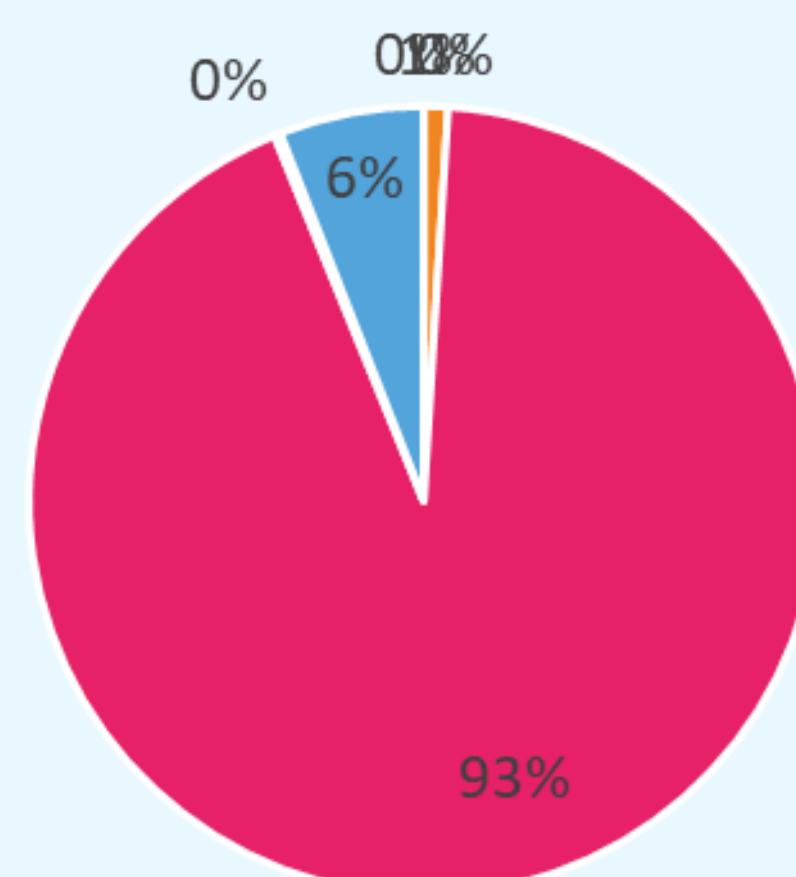
How do children and young people feel when in hospital?

Mood before visit from Spread a Smile entertainer



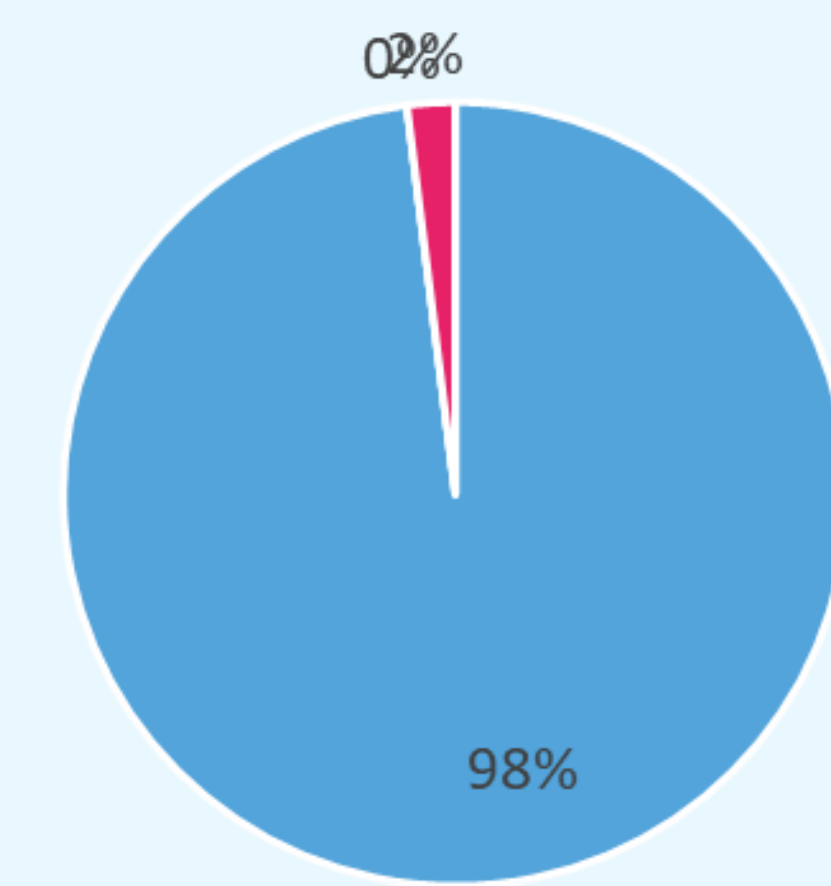
■ Sad ■ Worried ■ Bored ■ Happy ■ Not Sure ■ Other

Mood after visit from Spread a Smile entertainer



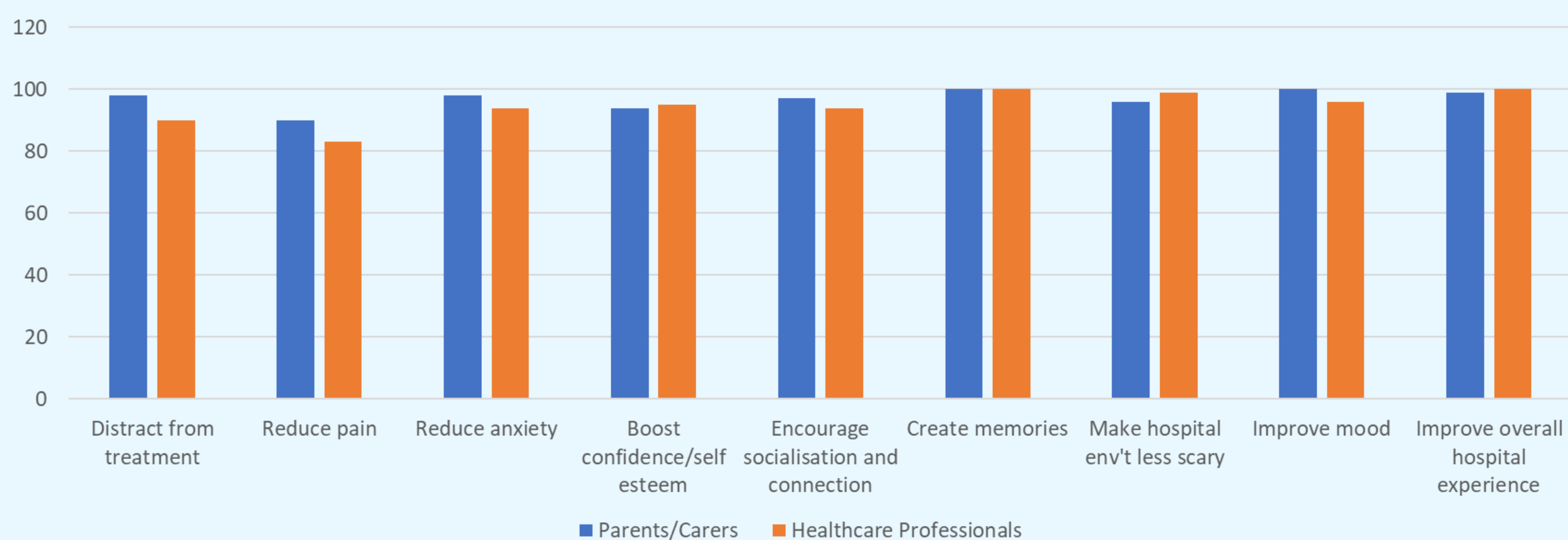
■ Sad ■ Worried ■ Bored ■ Happy ■ Not Sure ■ Other

Did the Spread a Smile Visit help to make your time in hospital better?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

% of parents, carers and healthcare professionals who feel that Spread a Smile entertainer visits can...



■ Parents/Carers ■ Healthcare Professionals