



# The Therapeutic Play Areas

Red Cross War Memorial  
Children's Hospital

Final Report

31 August 2022 - 31 March 2023





## Why create a playground at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital

Based on global statistics, half of the world's 2 billion children have been victims of at least one or more types of serious traumatic experience. The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital sees over 250 000 patients each year with various high-risk and specialised medical conditions. With 10 000 of those patients visiting the Physiotherapy Department, and a further 9000 patients visiting the Occupational Therapy Department each year, the hospital's vision of a rehabilitative playground facility becomes even more compelling. Medical professionals who perform life-saving interventions on patients recognise the need for Therapeutic Play as play can have a special therapeutic value for ill children, thus contributing to their physical and emotional well-being.

In partnership with various departments in the Hospital, with Occupational Therapy as the lead department, The Children's Hospital Trust developed a safe and stimulating new multi-purpose Therapeutic Play areas at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital which will cater for children of all ages and abilities, including outpatients, their caregivers and other family members as well as inpatients who are well enough to leave the ward supervised.

With the support of donors, 100% of your donations has contributed to the building of four magical and interactive Therapeutic Playgrounds which will provide each child with an escape from the reality of their traumatic experiences.



Every little one counts



## Our Aim

To provide rich, inclusive indoor and outdoor play spaces that cater to children of all ages and abilities, including outpatients, their caregivers and other family members (siblings etc.), and inpatients who are well enough to leave the ward with supervision.

Each area is designed to address the needs of all children, including those with physical, developmental, cognitive and sensory disabilities. The probability of engaging all children is increased by offering a variety of play equipment. A mixture of play categories will help create an exciting, more inclusive playground. One piece of equipment might cross multiple categories.



# Every little one counts



## Project Overview

### Project Timeline:

31 August 2022 - 31 March 2023 (building)

### Budget:

R12 600 000.00

### Funds Raised:

R12.6 million- entirely supported by generous donors

### 4 Therapeutic Play Areas:

- Main Therapeutic Play Area
- Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Therapeutic Play Area (DCAP)
- Occupational Therapy and Neuro Development Play Area
- Outpatients Play Area



Every little one counts



# Area 1: Main Therapeutic Playground

*In Memory of Ronald Patterson*

## Purpose:

This therapeutic playground offers patients opportunities to play freely or be used for therapy as part of their treatment plan. This is a safe and stimulating space for patients and/or visiting siblings to play freely with other children or with their parents or caregivers. The beautiful garden in and around the playground offers families a small respite while their children are in hospital.



BEFORE



AFTER



Every little one counts



## Area 2: The OT and Neuro Developmental Clinics in the Outpatients (OPD)

### Purpose:

An area designed by the Occupational Therapy team where therapeutic play will form part of the rehabilitation process within the treatment plan. Free play for children waiting for their appointments is encouraged.



BEFORE



AFTER



Every little one counts



**Area 3:**

**Internal S1 courtyard next to the outpatients department (OPD) waiting area**

**Purpose:**

This area services as a multi-purpose playground for patients who are waiting to be seen. The reception area of the Outpatients building serves a vast number of patients as folders for various clinics are collected from this point. The outdoor courtyard is situated within an enclosed space created by consulting rooms, reception areas and staff areas. The enclosure ensures the safety of patients who access the area.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



**Every little one counts**



**Area 4:**

**Play area at Division of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry**

**Purpose:**

This area will encourage therapeutic play during admission or for the outpatient's visits. Child and adolescent psychiatry and psychotherapy comprises the diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation of neuropsychiatric and all referrals go via community health clinics or district hospitals and through the district mental health team professionals. Self-referrals are not accepted.

The Child and Adolescent Outpatient Service provides assessments and treatment including individual, family and group therapy to children and adolescents (until aged 18 years) with a range of emotional and/

or behavioural problems, developmental disorders, as well as behaviour disturbances during childhood and adolescence.

The Therapeutic Learning Centre (TLC) assesses and treats children aged 6 to 12 years, who have not benefited sufficiently from outpatient interventions. Children attend as day or inpatients. The service offered at TLC includes a school programme, individual and group therapy, parenting and family work within a ward therapeutic milieu. Parents are involved in treatment. Referrals to the TLC are via Child and Adolescent outpatient psychiatry services.



**AFTER**



**BEFORE**



**Every little one counts**



# Multiple Benefits of Various Pieces of Equipment



## ROCKING

Different equipment provides different rocking motions in different positions - this provides the sense of balance.



## BALANCING

Improves static and dynamic balance, builds core body strength and provides postural support.



## CLIMBING, CRAWLING & STRENGTHENING

This provides activities that allow for the contraction and stretching of muscles as well as compression of the body's joints. It improves motor skills such as power, balance coordination and dexterity.



## WALKING & RUNNING

The main entrance space allows space to run; this builds endurance, influences muscle tone and enhances dynamic balance



# Every little one counts



# Multiple Benefits of Various Pieces of Equipment



## SENSORY MAZE

Tactile: Activities that address the sense of touch.



## VISUAL PLAY ITEMS

Address visual perpetual components like focussing, tracking, matching and visual memory play.



## CO-OPERATIVE PLAY

Equipment such as the seesaw encourages co-operative play, which is children interacting and playing with each other (working together).



## SOCIAL PLAY

Parallel play encourages children to play together in the same area. The space also allows for associative play where children play independently but do the same as other children. This encourages interaction through talking, sharing and taking turns.



## COZY/QUIET PLACES

There are spaces within the Therapeutic Play Areas that provide a space where a child can retreat to and relax when experiencing sensory or cognitive overload areas where child can go to be alone, but can still be observed by the caregiver



Every little one counts



## Siya plays his way to healing

When she named him Siyabongakonke, she was unaware of the depth that this name would carry. Siyabongakonke means “we are grateful for everything”. And this very same gratitude fills Langa mom, Nomsa, as she reflects on her son’s healing journey.

Just over a month ago, Siya (6) was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare disorder in which your body’s immune system attacks your nerves. It starts with a weakness and tingling in the hands and feet and the sensations quickly spread, eventually paralyzing your whole body.

Siya first complained of leg and body pains. He lost his mobility and he appeared listless and lethargic. Nomsa rushed her son to the Vanguard Day Hospital, where he was transferred to Somerset Hospital and subsequently to Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital. At Red Cross, he was immediately taken to the ICU department and was placed on a machine, unable to breathe or move independently.

Nomsa sheds tears of joy and gratitude as she looks at her son, now in a wheelchair showing significant mobility in his upper body. In the little wheelchair, Siya can move himself around because his arms have gotten stronger. “God is good,” she says as she wipes the tears streaming down her face. She brightens as she watches Siya blow bubbles to physiotherapist, Eleonora Lozano. Since moving from ICU to the BreathEasy Ward E2, Siya has received holistic medical treatment, including physiotherapy.

Siya’s journey of healing through play starts with blowing bubbles, to help his breathing, and throwing the ball. Eleonora will then take him outside to the playground area, at the entrance of the Hospital, where he would play on the rocking equipment and seesaw to regain his sense of balance. As he grows stronger, he will gradually move to playing on the balance bridge, the rock climbing and rope climbing. The stairs and slides will be used to rebuild his strength and coordination.

“He loves it when the physiotherapist comes in. He just lights up. I think he gets excited about playing. I also am encouraged when I watch him do his physio exercises. At some point, I didn’t think I would ever see my child catch or throw a ball. I never thought he could speak again, but now, I am hopeful. Hopeful that eventually, he will be able to walk again,” Nomsa says.

Eleonora, the physiotherapist, walks into the ward armed with balls, stuffed dolls and even a water bubble toy daily. Children develop critical physical, cognitive, social and emotional skills through therapeutic play. They heal through play. For Siya, catching the bubble and throwing the beach ball, this helps in his healing journey. Therapeutic play benefits about **10 000 physiotherapy patients** and **9 000 occupational therapy patients** at the Red Cross Children’s Hospital. These little patients could benefit even more from the safe and stimulating new multi-purpose Therapeutic Play areas at the Hospital, where they can go outside and do what little ones do best. Ideally, Siya could be working on a mat, but Eleanor and other physiotherapists must work in the wards due the ward not having a dedicated gym. The Playground Project will help little ones like Siya and his mother to continue their treatments and exercises in multi-purpose Therapeutic Play Areas during their free time. On Siya’s development, Eleonora says: “He loves cars and playing with his mom. We would also like to start getting him to stand and learn how to walk again.





## How your donation has helped children at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital

Children and their families will benefit in the following way:

- The Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital sees over 250 000 patients each year with various high-risk and specialised medical conditions. With 10 000 of those patients visiting the Physiotherapy Department, and a further 9000 patients visiting the Occupational Therapy Department each year, children now have a stimulating rehabilitative space that will be implemented through therapeutic play.
- Hospital and visiting patients who are well enough to go outside now have a safe space to play in under supervision. Children can forget their reality for a moment as they enter the world of their imagination.
- The playgrounds create the opportunity for healthy social interaction between children.
- Opportunities are created to build relationships between families/caregivers as they learn to play with their children.
- Families and caregivers have a safe and comfortable space to rest or take a break.
- The main therapeutic playground at the entrance of the Hospital ensures that it is a less scary place for children as they enter.

“ To us, this is not just a playground, but a safe place where children of all abilities can play and explore the worlds around them, the multidisciplinary team who worked on this project, together with the Children's Hospital Trust have created a very special environment. We thank the donors, whose generosity will leave a mark on the lives of children who visit the hospital, for years to come.

Dr Anita Parbhoo, CEO of the RCWMCH

“ It brings a sense of normal to patients, parents, and siblings, in an often-stressful situation. We hope that this beautiful playground abounds with the sounds of laughter and joy and helps to restore those who play in it back to full health.

Mrs Linda Whitfield, Executive Trustee of the Harry Crossley Foundation.



Every little one counts