

## Supporting children diagnosed with diabetes

### Sammy the Sloth

After a child is diagnosed with diabetes the Paediatric Diabetes Team at RHCYP provide information and treatment intensively over a 10 week period, involving five clinic visits, in-patient stays, a home visit and school training. This can be overwhelming and frightening for children, so to provide comfort, and as an educational and normalisation tool (as many children will not know anyone else with diabetes or with a monitor), the team provides Sammy the Sloth. Sammy is a soft toy with a libre sensor, a continuous glucose monitor, which the children also have. NHS Lothian Charity provided £600 from the RHCYP Endocrine & Diabetes Specific Fund to purchase 20 soft toys for the team to use as part of patients' treatment and after care.

### How Sammy makes a difference

- Reduces isolation – As Sammy the Sloth is wearing the same device as them, it has helped children feel less alone in their new journey. The toy acts as a comforting companion that shares their experience.
- Aids in education – Parents, healthcare professionals or children themselves have used the Sammy the Sloth to demonstrate or teach diabetes management essentials in a fun and low-stress way.
- Gaining control – The child and their family become the carer to Sammy rather than professionals, giving them a sense of control and management over the situation, which helps alleviate stress and anxiety related to any future treatment and/or care.
- Opens communication – Provided parents/child with a tool to talk about what is going on for them through Sammy.
- Reduces stress – Studies show 'Transitional objects' like Sammy are proven tools for comfort and emotional grounding for when feeling stressed: "The mere feeling of cradling something soft and relaxing can soothe young children, as well as help ebb anxiety and fear."



Sammy the Sloth

Sammy has been a great tool for us as a family to normalise and inform about Finn's condition with his friends, at school and even with his younger sister."

Family member

### Finn and 'Slothy'

8 year old Finn was diagnosed with diabetes in April 2025. Finn's dad shared: "When Finn was diagnosed he was scared and didn't know what was going on. At his first visit to the hospital, he was told he would have to stay for a few days which was difficult and scary for Finn. The nurse kindly gave him the soft toy and told him he was very special to get this and it became his pal in the hospital while he was there. Finn named him 'Slothy' and has since become a wee part of the family and is one of the privileged teddies that stays in bed with him!"

When Finn did go back to school, the school staff were keen for him to share his new diagnosis with his class so they would understand his condition and be able to look out for him. Finn's dad explained how the soft toy helped him do this: "Finn took Slothy with him to share with his class and showed the disc on Slothy's arm rather than his own disc. All the children were able to hold Slothy and look closely at the device which was much less intimidating for Finn." He adds: "It's such a great initiative and has made a real difference to Finn and to our family."