

When people become
sick and need care.

- Children, as well as adults, can become sick and have need of care.
- Sister Frances Dominica, a Church of England nursing nun, first thought of a children's hospice through her work caring for a young girl named Helen, who lived at home with her family but needed 24 hour care.
- She founded Helen House, the world's first children's hospice, which opened in November 1982.
- A hospice is a place rather like a home for those who are very seriously ill and likely to die.

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- It is natural that the parents of a much-loved but very ill child would want to care for them at home, but caring for your child every day and night, as well as looking after the rest of your family and earning a living, can be exhausting.
- Helen's family's experience highlighted the need for care and support for children with life-shortening conditions and for their family.
- Helen House was set up to help families cope by providing occasional respite care, modelled on that provided in the family home - personalised and tailored to individual needs.
- The hospice was designed to be as much like an ordinary home as possible. It had eight children's bedrooms, as well as rooms for parents to stay.
- The hospice is about making the most of life, whatever the circumstances.

- Thirty years on, there are now two hospice houses.
- Helen House is for children from birth up to 18 years old, and Douglas House for young adults.
- The two hospice houses offer specialist care and pain management, short breaks and end-of-life care, as well as counselling and practical support for the whole family.

- Jane came to Helen House in 2003 with her 9 year old son Sebastian, who was battling with cancer.
- Helen House cared for us; it made us feel very safe. It gave us the chance to do what we wanted to do for our son, the way that we wanted to do it.
- There was so much love and support. We have much cherished memories.
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- Helen House stayed in touch with us and we became part of a Helen House group of families and we continue to support one another.
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SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- What has been your experience of illness and who or what helped you most?
- What do you think sick children need most?
- How do you think their parents feel?
- What do parents need?
- How do you think you can show compassion and care for those who are ill?

Task

Write a job description for a carer or volunteer in a hospice.

- What qualities do you think are needed to look after someone who is sick?
- What beliefs and values would be important?
- What could they offer, etc?