

Esme and her drawings



St Luke's

ESME REMEMBERS HER NANNY WITH THE SUPPORT OF ST LUKE'S

In March 2024, 8-year-old Esme's beloved Nanny spent four days at St Luke's In Patient Centre at the end of her life.

The care she received was wonderful. Esme's Mum, Lisa, says "St Luke's is nothing short of amazing, and so different from what I thought it was going to be. Mum had her own room, which we decorated with all her photos so it felt like home. By the point she was admitted, Mum couldn't say anything, but I know she wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else."

However, the gap she left behind after she died was huge. Esme shared a deep bond with her Nanny and often felt overwhelmed with emotion.

Lisa attended the St Luke's group counselling sessions to help manage her own grief, which is where she heard about the new **Children's Bereavement Group and its Art Therapy sessions.**

The group sounded like it could help Esme and give her a way to express her emotions in a safe, creative environment.

Esme joined the group and met with other children going through the same thing as her. Together they enjoyed crafts, games and even created their own 'worry monsters'. "I really liked all the drawing and crafts," said Esme. "Making blob trees and worry monsters made me really happy."

A worry monster is a cuddly toy/doll designed to help children manage their anxiety, fears and allow them to express concerns to a





Esme and Mum Lisa

supportive, non-judgmental 'Friend'. "I would write down my worries and post them into my monster's mouth to share my problems," said Esme.

The group also created a 'worry box' where children could post their feelings anonymously, or choose to have them read out. The group also taught them how to talk about their feelings, and how talking to someone who is going through something similar can help you to feel better.

"All the arts and crafts made me forget about feeling sad," said Esme. "Sometimes I like to keep my feelings a secret, but sometimes I like to express them so I can get them out of me and feel better. When the other children said their feelings out loud, it made me want to do it too."

The children also participated in activities to help remember their loved one, and for Esme that meant making a bag with colours to represent memories of her favourite times with her Nanny, and decorating a candle with her name on it.

Esme soon persuaded her cousin to join and wants to encourage other children to do the same.

"I'd say to anyone else, don't be nervous, it's really fun and it helps. Start with something you like, like painting or reading to keep yourself busy and take your mind off it."

Reflecting on the past year, Esme's Mum can see the difference St Luke's has made to Esme's understanding of her loss, as well as her own.

"Esme was very close with my Mum, as were all the cousins, and this seemed like the perfect outlet for her to express her feelings," said Mum Lisa.

"I notice fewer occasions now of her getting upset, and when she does, she can find a way to cope. She has even learned how to reassure me when I'm struggling."

And through their positive experience, Lisa and her family are determined to share their story to support St Luke's future, and encourage others to do the same.

"We feel so lucky that not only did Mum receive St Luke's care, but the whole family did too. It's the most loving and caring place and the fact that she got to spend her last few days here means so much."