

Abigail

Abigail has cerebral palsy; a lifelong condition which affects movement and co-ordination caused by the brain. But thanks to an innovative operation at Alder Hey, Abigail has been given a new lease of life.

10 year old Abigail from Preston has a lifelong condition called cerebral palsy which affects movement and coordination caused by a problem with the brain.

Her parents first noticed something wasn't quite right when Abigail's twin sister Ellie was reaching milestones such as sitting up quicker than Abigail. Abigail was diagnosed with cerebral palsy after a brain scan which was a total shock for the family who had to quickly adapt to Abigail's new and overwhelming routine of regular hospital appointments and physio.

The diagnosis has had a big effect on Abigail and it can hold her back from doing the things that most children can enjoy, including playing with her twin sister, which can make her feel frustrated and left out at times. Abigail can't take part in some sports because of difficulties with her movement and in the beginning her speech was also affected; it also takes her longer to eat a meal, ride a bike and other things many would take for granted.

Abigail recently had Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy (SDR) surgery which was performed by brilliant Alder Hey surgeon Ms Benedetta Pettorini; only one of five surgeons in the UK offering this. The procedure corrects muscle spasticity caused by abnormal communication among the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscles by cutting the nerve rootlets in the spinal cord that are sending abnormal signals to the muscles.

As part of Abigail's recovery, she undertook weeks of physiotherapy at Alder Hey and worked closely with Alder Hey's physio team including Carol. Often Carol would work with Abigail for two sessions a day for three weeks to improve her mobility post operation.

Mum Helen said "The operation has been a godsend. Abigail can now do independent stepping, climb the stairs, get in and out of the bath...all things she couldn't do beforehand which have really helped to increase her independence and confidence. We can't thank Miss Pettorini and the team enough for the care we received. And of course Carol and the amazing physio team who work with her tirelessly to help give her the best future."

Abigail's journey was also documented on BBC2's recent series of *Hospital* and superstar Abigail is still deciding whether she wants to become a teacher or a doctor when she's a little bit older, so she can help other children like those who have helped her.