



UNIVERSITY  
*of York*

**RESEARCH**



The  
**Martin House**  
RESEARCH CENTRE

A white hand is shown holding a yellow ribbon, which is a symbol for cancer awareness. The background is a dark, textured wood. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**SPECIALIST  
PALLIATIVE CARE  
FOR CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE WITH  
CANCER**

# MARTIN HOUSE RESEARCH CENTRE

## The issue

Despite advances in treatment, childhood cancer is still one of the leading causes of death in childhood and adolescence. Access to specialist paediatric palliative care is argued to be an important component of children and young people's cancer services. However, uptake is variable and there are uncertainties about how and when to involve specialist paediatric palliative care, and the benefits of doing so. This study examined existing evidence to explore the impact of these specialist services and identify the factors affecting access.

## The research

Evidence from 42 studies tells us that children who access specialist palliative care have less intensive care at the end-of-life, more advance care planning, and fewer hospital deaths. However, there is no robust evidence about effects on quality of life or symptom management. Uncertainty about the added value of specialist palliative care is a key barrier to referral, as are uncertainties about when to introduce palliative care to families and the emotions involved. Children with blood cancers are the least likely to receive specialist input.

## The outcome

We need further high quality research to determine whether specialist paediatric palliative care improves quality of life and symptom management for children and young people with cancer. Our own consultation with families and those working in cancer and palliative care services has identified other important outcomes to measure, and the need to involve children and young people in this research. Interventions that support oncology teams to initiate conversations about palliative care with families could also help to address key barriers to access.

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## Published paper

[www.tinyurl.com/y84cjsyo](http://www.tinyurl.com/y84cjsyo)

## Our research themes:

CREATIVITY | CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION | ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE | JUSTICE AND EQUALITY  
HEALTH AND WELLBEING | RISK, EVIDENCE AND DECISION MAKING | TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE FUTURE