Benny gets better
“A diagnosis of hydrocephalus can be worrying for both children and their parents. I hope that those children lucky enough to meet Benny the Bear in hospital will read this book and discover that hydrocephalus needn’t be scary.”

Mr Conor Mallucci,
Consultant Paediatric Neurosurgeon,
Alderhey Children’s Hospital, Liverpool.
with love from Benny Bear to:

Written by Rosemary Batchelor and Val Meyer-Hall from Spina bifida • Hydrocephalus • Information • Networking • Equality - SHINE
Illustrated by Charlotte Meyer whose sister has hydrocephalus
This is Benny the Bear.
He is a very special bear.
Benny is a bear with a shunt.
Benny needs the shunt to help him to stay well because when he was a little bear, Benny was poorly.
He had bad headaches and he kept being sick. Benny didn’t want to run or jump or play football. He didn’t even want to tease his sister, Sally or watch TV. He just wanted to lie down or go to sleep. Sometimes he felt dizzy and fell over. Sometimes he just cried and cried because he felt so ill.
Benny's mummy was very worried and took him to see a doctor. “What a poorly little bear” said the doctor and sent him to see a really clever doctor called a neurosurgeon in the big hospital in town.
At the hospital, Benny went for a special photograph called a scan to find out why his head was hurting.

Benny had to lie very still during the scan so that the doctors could get clear pictures of inside his head.
The scan showed that Benny had too much fluid inside his brain and it was not draining away as it should.

The neurosurgeon explained that this meant that Benny has hydrocephalus. To make Benny feel better, he would need an operation to put a shunt into his head to help drain the fluid away.
In the morning of Benny’s operation, Benny wasn’t allowed to have his breakfast or anything to drink. Mummy helped Benny to put on a funny shirt called a theatre gown and then he had some medicine to make him feel sleepy.
A nice porter wheeled Benny in his hospital bed along the corridors to the operating theatre and Mummy stayed with him until he was asleep.
When Benny woke up he felt a bit sore on his tummy and on one side of his head. Mummy was sitting by his bed and she explained that the doctors had put his shunt in his head and a long tube under his skin which drained into his tummy. Benny yawned and went back to sleep.
The next time Benny woke up he felt much better and soon the soreness was gone. After a few days, Mummy took Benny back home. He was so happy to see Daddy and Sally and tell them about his time in hospital.
Benny is back at school now. He has a shunt alert card to keep in his pocket. This explains that he is a very special bear who has a shunt to keep him well.

Look at Benny! He can run around, he can jump and play football and he loves to ride his bike. Sometimes he will even tease Sally or chase the cat.
some words that you may not know

Hydrocephalus
This is when the brain produces too much fluid or the fluid does not drain properly.

Neurosurgeon
A doctor who works in a hospital and who specialises in problems that happen to peoples' brains.

Scan
A picture of the inside of the head which helps doctors to understand how to help their patient.

Shunt
A tube that takes away any extra fluid from the head and drains it into the tummy (or sometimes another part of the body) where it is absorbed naturally.

Diagram by Pete Noons
Shunt Alert Card

Ask a grown up to get you one from Shine. You should carry your card with you in your pocket or bag every time you go out.
If you lose it (or put it in the washing machine!), we will send another one.

The phone number for Shine is 01733 555988
Email: info@shinecharity.org.uk
Website: shinecharity.org.uk
Write to: Shine,
42 Park Road,
Peterborough
PE1 2UQ
This is a story about a special bear with a shunt but lots of girls and boys have shunts too. Perhaps you are one of them.