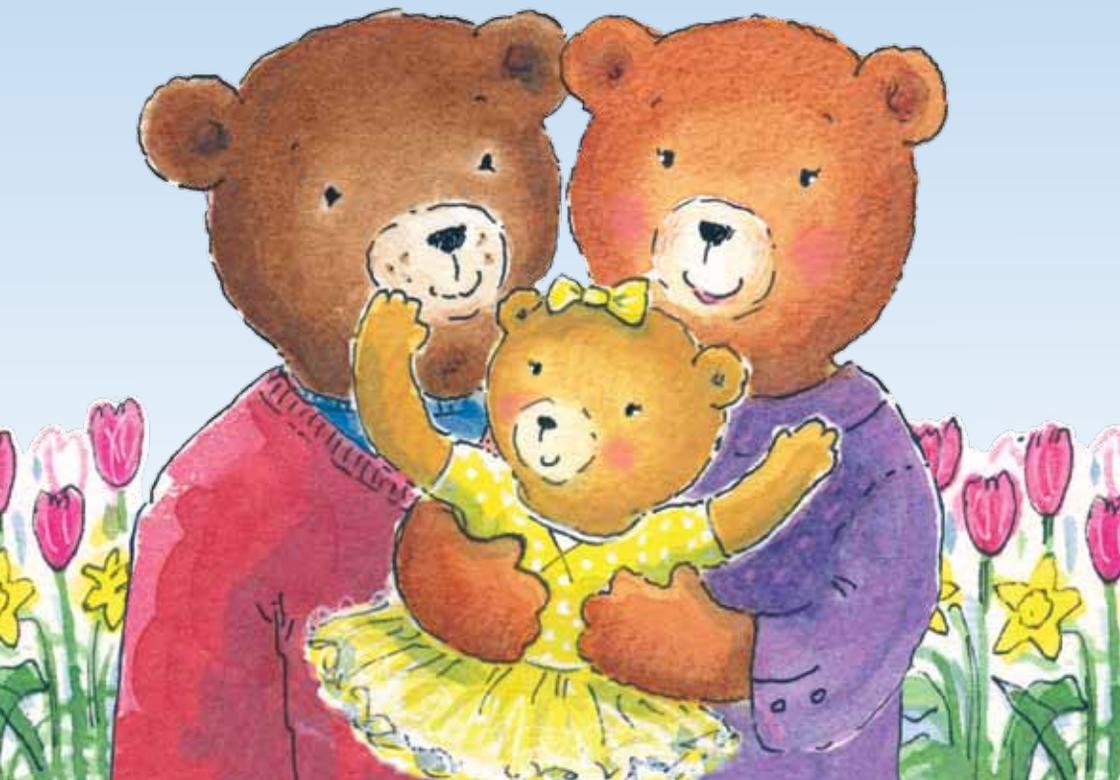


Bella Bear

Our New Baby



As Bella's Mummy, I wanted to write this book for other parents, family members, friends and siblings and most importantly, Bella, to help her understand her condition. Hopefully we will learn together, work together, laugh together, sometimes cry together, but ultimately, achieve together...



Bella x

*With love from
Bella Bear to:*

.....

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Written by Shine's Development Team

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I would like to introduce you to my new daughter, Bella Bear, who was a much longed for baby and born with Spina Bifida.

Bella was a much longed for baby bear.



When Bella was growing inside my tummy, I went to the hospital to have an *ultrasound scan*, which helped the Doctor see inside my tummy and check that my baby was growing properly.

The Doctor checked the size of my baby and looked closely at Bella's spine.

The scan showed that the bones of Bella's spine were open like a 'C' shape, instead of a closed shape, like an 'O'. The Doctor told me that Bella had *Spina Bifida*.

*Bella was a much longed for baby bear and now,
would be an even more special baby bear.*





After Bella was born she had to go to a *special baby bear unit* in the hospital, where a very clever Doctor, called a *Neurosurgeon* closed the gap where the bones of her spine had not grown together properly.

The *Neurosurgeon* told us that Bella may need some help with her walking and when she needed to go to the toilet. This was because some of her nerves, that help work her legs and her bladder and bowels, were damaged when they were poking out of the gap in her spine. All babies wee; Bella would just need some extra help to wee in a slightly different way.

A lovely Nurse came to see Bella to explain and show us how to empty Bella's bladder with a *catheter*, or a *wiggly wee tube*, as she called it! The Nurse said it wouldn't hurt Bella and after watching carefully, Daddy said, 'It's not just easy, it's easy weezy!'

The Nurse told us that Bella would learn how to do this for herself when she was bigger.





*Bella was a much longed for baby bear,
very special and very brave.*



Bella's paws also turned in, so the Doctor told us that they would make some little booties out of plaster to help make them straighter.

With the help of Bella's *Physiotherapist*, we would learn special ways to play with Bella, which would help make her muscles stronger.



The *Physiotherapist* showed us how to roll Bella over onto her tummy for *tummy time*, which would help her muscles grow stronger and was great fun too!

We learnt how to place some of Bella's favourite toys on the floor, just slightly out of reach, so that Bella would have to stretch and work her muscles to touch them.



*Bella was a much longed for baby bear,
very special, very brave and
having fun tummy time.*

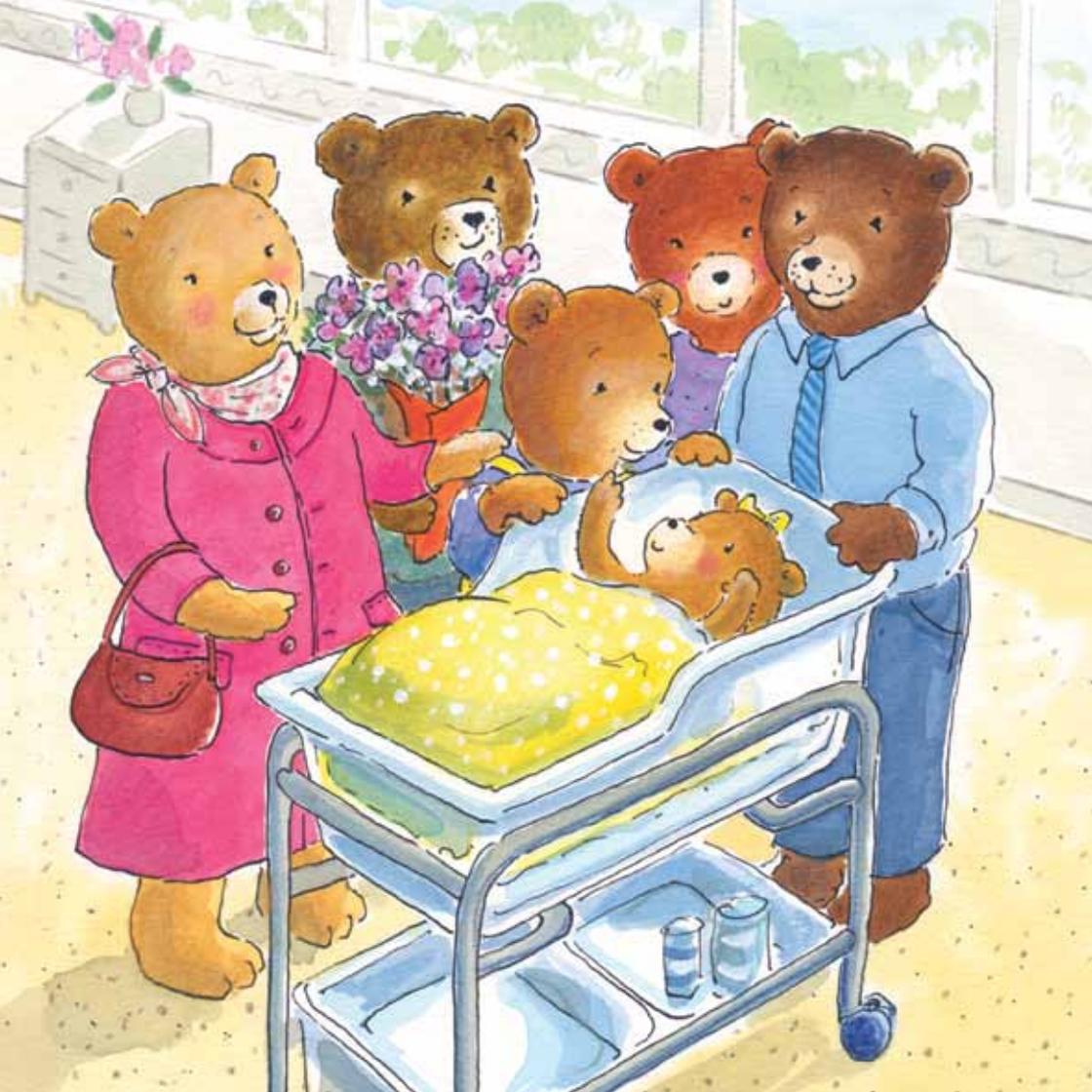


Whilst Bella was in hospital being cared for by lots of Doctors and Nurses, some visitors arrived. It was Benny Bear with his Mummy and Daddy, who were all so excited to see Bella in her little see through cot! Benny said she looked so perfect and cosy, wrapped up in her blanket and with a cute yellow bow over her fluffy right ear.

Benny found it difficult to say her name, Bella Bear, so we said, 'just call her 'BB' (Bee Bee)'. 'I think that means *beautiful baby*', said Benny's Daddy. Benny was sure Bella gave him a smile - but his Daddy said she was too young to smile just yet and it was probably hiccups or wind!

*Bella was a much longed for baby bear,
very special, very brave, having fun tummy time
and beautiful.*





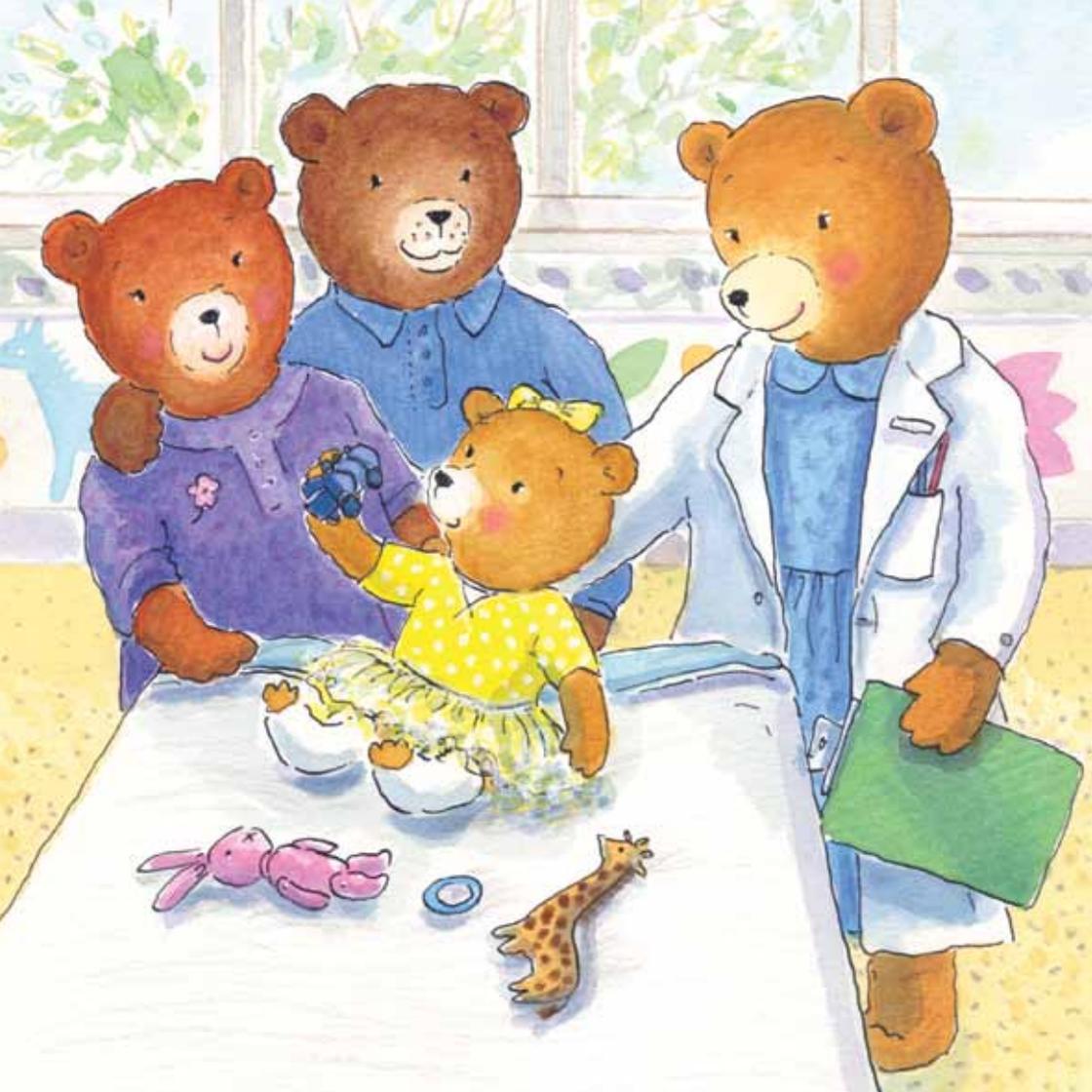
When we were finally allowed to go home, we were all so excited. We had painted Bella's bedroom yellow, the same colour as the sun. Bella's Daddy said she was, *'our own little ray of sunshine, everyday'*.

Over her cot hung a shiny mobile which played a gentle lullaby to help her sleep. She looked so tiny laying in her own grown up cot, cooing and babbling as her mobile twisted and turned around, until her eyes gradually closed, she yawned and drifted off to sleep.

Bella was a much longed for baby bear, very special, very brave, having fun tummy time, beautiful and our own little 'ray of sunshine'







By the time Bella was six months old, she had met lots of new people at the hospital. She had seen a *Physiotherapist*, a *Neurosurgeon*, her *Urologist* and *Wee Nurse*. Bella never made a fuss when we went to hospital, in fact she loved all the attention.

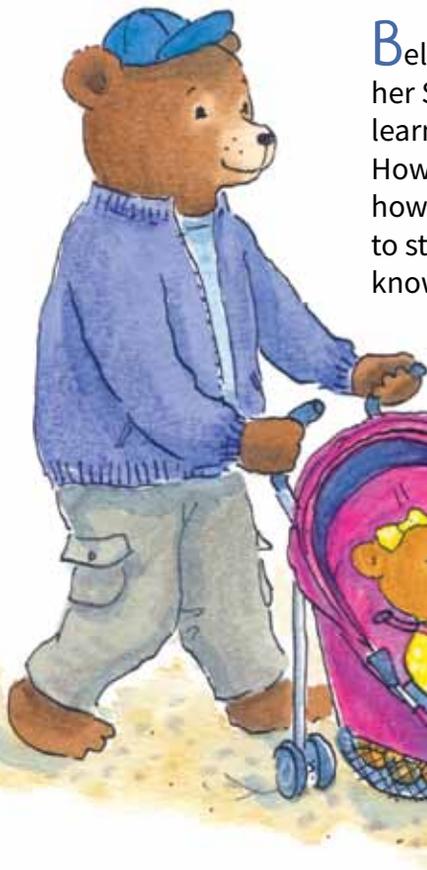
At her six month hospital check, the Doctor checked to see that the operation on her back to close the gap was healing. They were really pleased with her progress and we were very proud parents. Bella just smiled and gurgled as if to say she was very proud of herself too!

As Bella grows older, she may have a wheelchair to whizz around in.

We know there will be lots of new people for Bella to meet, they will be there to help teach her and... have fun.

Bella was a much longed for baby, very special, brave, having fun tummy time, beautiful, a little ray of sunshine and we are all very proud.





Bella is still too young to know about her Spina Bifida, but I know she will learn how to become independent. How to whizz around in her wheelchair, how to use her wiggly wee tube, how to stay healthy, and most importantly, know that she will always be...





*A much longed for baby bear, very special, very brave,
having fun tummy time, beautiful, a little ray of sunshine,
and with a wonderful life ahead and new and exciting
things to learn every day.*

We are all very proud of her!



Look out for Bella's next book - where she will tell you about starting school, swimming lessons and her favourite holiday treat - sleepovers with her new friends. So many exciting and fun things to look forward to.



Some of Bella's words you may not have heard before:

Spina Bifida: a condition that some babies are born with where the bones of the spine are not formed properly and the baby's legs, bladder and bowel might not work properly

Bladder: a place where 'wee' is stored in your tummy

Bowel: a place in your body where 'poo' is made and stored

Catheter: or Wiggly Wee Tube - a special tube to drain 'wee' from the bladder

Physiotherapist: a person who helps with movement, stretching and reaching

Neurosurgeon: a doctor who deals with brain, spine and other nerve problems

Urologist: a doctor who deals with 'wee' problems



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This is a story about a special bear with Spina Bifida.
Lots of girls and boys have Spina Bifida as well.
Perhaps you have too?



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