

SURE START MRM EVALUATION MIGHTY MOUTHS

Mighty Mouths is a lunchtime speech and language group for children with specific needs. It aims to provide parent/carer support and information, language activities for children, help with behaviour issues and fussy/faddy eating habits.

Children are referred to the group through the Portage Home Visiting Service via the Portage Home Visitor, who runs the group with the help of the Project Nursery Nurse.

The first group began on 18th November 2004 and finished on 16th December 2004, for a total of 5 2-hour sessions. Nine parents/carers attended the group, with an average of 6 adults and 7 children per session.

The 2nd group began on 27th January and finished on 17th March 2005, for a total of 7 sessions. Ten parent/carers attended, with an average of 7 adults and 7 children per session. All family members were invited to attend to support the child.

Parents brought a packed lunch in the 1st group, where fussy/faddy eating was a major concern. In the 2nd group, lunch was provided, and a variety of healthy finger foods were introduced and this was well received by families and became a focus of the group.

Another focus of the group was to introduce parents to Makaton signing and help them to communicate with their child. It was felt a parent-training course would help with this and all parents in the group will attend a Makaton course in late April 2005, as organized through Sure Start.

Families in the group continue to receive outreach from the Portage Service and home visits from the Project Nursery Nurse. There is also outreach through the nurseries attended by the children to target speech and language activities. Several families joined other groups, including Soft Play, Sing and Sign, and Family Projects.

Parent feedback has been positive and all parents reported:

- *They felt welcome and supported in the group
- *The topics, information in the group is helpful
- *They enjoy the group
- *The group has helped them deal with their child's behaviour better
- *The activities in the session are just right for their child
- *Makaton is a useful way to help their child communicate

Parent comments included:

“brilliant sessions! My child has improved in such a short time due to this group. My other 2 sons are also getting a lot from attending.”

“both Debbie and Julie bend with the children's needs and adjust appropriately to suit their needs in both self-help and speech. The Makaton skills are great. And if you have

any problems you can tell them and even if they can't help they will find someone who can.”

“Really good and helpful for my child”

Recommendations for future groups of Mighty Mouths:

Continue to provide lunches for families, but develop more variety in taste and texture and introduce foods that require cutlery.

Plan a day trip in consultation with parents.

Evaluate effectiveness of Parent Makaton training for future courses.

Liase more effectively with Speech and Language service

Link with other services, including toy library and oral health, and establish a plan for weekly visits to the Sure Start library.

Encourage inclusion in other community groups

Debbie Bailey
SURE START MRM
April 2005