

## Mums and Young Childrens Group

### Ethos and best practice

#### Child-led play

- Sessions are child-led, with toys and activities made available that cater for the children's interests.
- No structured activities are insisted upon although we have a routine with a snack in the middle of the session which is outlined below. We are also keen to get mums and children together for a story, song or activity at the end.
- With a child-led environment, as adults we should wait to be invited into play and/or ask to join in, allowing the children to create the boundaries or the game and lead the way. Being in tune with the child is key, being aware of and responding to their need and cues and helping them to develop their play.
- When we play, we allow the child to direct, often observing until we understand their rules. We should narrate play without steering or taking over.
- We plan to introduce some activities that may support their development or engage them with some interests e.g. planting seeds, simple age-appropriate art, bug hunt, and this will be planned according to the make-up of the children in the group. Please let us know if you have any skills or interests you can bring to the group!
- We plan to introduce some informal holiday meet ups and some breakfast mornings on a Friday to help mums build relationships.

#### Session structure:

- 9.30 – 9.45am: Volunteers arrive and help set up
- 10am: Mums arrive and handover to MYC Group Coordinator, helping settle in the children
- 10.15am: Mums go to Garden Room for the group
- 10.45/11am – 11.15am: Snack time (timing flexible, halfway through the morning)
- 11.45: Mums come out of group, handover (join for group story and song)
- 12pm: Mums and children depart.
- 12-12.30pm: Pack down and debrief with MYC Group Therapist.

#### Respecting the child's boundaries and safeguarding

- Safeguarding is our number one concern and training will be given on this.
- As a volunteer you should never be 1-2-1 with a child, another adult must always be present in the room.
- If you have any concerns at all, please speak to the MYC Group Coordinator during the debrief. We have a comprehensive policy, and more training and regular updates are given.
- We always encourage children to give consent, even with things like blowing noses. We approach the child and ask them if it is okay for us to help them blow their nose, and also ask if they would like us to do it or would like to do it themselves.
- Staff/volunteers are encouraged not to instigate hugging/tickling/physical contact with children but with this age group, children often can become familiar and comfortable to sit on laps for stories or hug when leaving. This should always be led by the children and adults must always be aware of safeguarding best practice.

## Managing behaviour

- As staff/volunteers, we do not discipline the children. We rely on distraction and verbal cues to diffuse and redirect energies. If this is not effective, we will get mums to support.
- If a child has persistent tricky behaviour, we will speak to mum and work with her to support the child in the same way that she does at home or in a way that she is comfortable with.
- We support children in navigating sharing and turn taking. We've found that narrating a play situation can help, by talking through who has what toy and how the game is being played, but we never snatch toys back or tell children off when they have a disagreement over sharing toys. Sharing is always tricky, particularly with this young age group but reminding the children what they *can* do rather than what they shouldn't be doing and when it will be their turn is helpful. We do have use of sand timers in cases with older children, where they can have a set time with a particular toy or activity.
- We ask that children do not bring their own toys to the group to avoid unnecessary conflict or sharing issues.

## Snack time

- We tend to purchase snacks that are pre-packaged rather than homemade, for hygiene and allergy reasons. It makes it easier to know exactly what is in the food provided.
- Children will have our snacks, so they all have the same rather than bringing their own to avoid conflict.
- For snack time we insist they remain seated whilst eating and smaller children are supervised more closely to lessen any risk of choking.
- We sometimes read a story during snack or play a seated game. We've found this encourages them to stay seated for longer and eat more of their snack. However, we do not insist they eat, nor do we verbally challenge or police the types of food or order that the food is eaten.

## Nappies and toileting

- Always make sure the group's own bin is available throughout the session, with a bin liner in to dispose of all rubbish after session into the large grey bin outside the office. We do not place any used nappies in the Meeting House bins.
- Please ensure that wet wipes are not thrown in the toilets as this blocks the drains.
- Staff and volunteers do not help with toileting. It is the responsibility of the mum to do this as this involves 1-2-1 care. The MYC Co-ordinator must knock and ask mum to come out during the session to help the child with these needs.
- We are looking at whether or not volunteers can change nappies with mum's permission as this is done in the room with other people present.

## Medical needs

- Application of suncream, if a sunny day, must be done by the parents before the session.
- We operate similarly to a nursery or school where we ask that a child not attend if they have had vomiting/diarrhoea within the last 48hrs.
- As a rule of thumb, we will notify the mum if there is any kind of accident.
- The MYC Co-ordinator is first aid trained.

## Photographs

- Photographs should only be taken by the Group Co-ordinator, with express written permission from the mums.
- Volunteers shouldn't take photos of the play space and all adults should avoid using their phones whilst supervising the children.