

“A very special mouse”: how resources funded by MedEquip4Kids are helping children with mental health problems

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Since 2014, children’s charity MedEquip4Kids has raised over £75,000 to provide resources for underfunded Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across the country. These resources are helping to support the one in ten children and young people in the UK with a mental health condition.

Zoe is a nurse practitioner at a CAMHS unit which this year received resources including toys, books and games from MedEquip4Kids. Here she tells us how a toy mouse helped her make a dramatic breakthrough.

“Recently I conducted a series of individual sessions with a 14-year-old girl who has autism and selective mutism, conditions which made it very difficult for her to connect or communicate with me. The sessions focused on personal hygiene and menstruation: topics which are embarrassing for any young person, but in her case they were even more challenging.

Weeks passed with me making weekly visits to the school for the individual sessions. The girl never spoke a word and would merely shrug her shoulders while looking down, soothingly stroking a silky ribbon. Heavy bags were crossed around her neck and shoulders. In one bag were her schoolbooks, in the other soft toys, including Lilt the frog. Lilt was to be my key to unlocking the barriers between the young lady and the world around her.

Armed with a little mouse from Bagpuss, who sang sweetly when you squeezed his tummy, I set off for my next session.

“What have you done this weekend?” I asked her.

Shoulder shrug.

“Look. I don’t need to know. It’s Mouse who has asked me to ask you, so just tell him.”

I held Mouse out to the girl and turned my face and body away from them. She spoke fluently and articulately in great detail as she explained at length what she had done over the weekend. It was the first time I’d heard her voice. I cried.

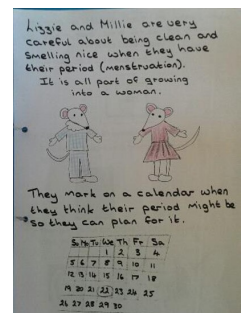
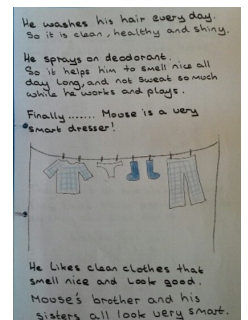
It was to be the start of something wonderful. Using Mouse, I was able to indirectly teach the girl the importance of personal hygiene and various other skills. I produced a booklet for her, all about Mouse and his sisters. This way she was able to learn without fear, judgement or embarrassment.

Over a couple of weeks, she was then able to answer me and talk directly to me. Although Mouse always came along for the ride, as he is a very special mouse.”

MedEquipKids improves children’s healthcare by providing equipment not available from limited NHS resources. Since 1985, the charity has raised over £20 million and last year its work benefited the health of over 113,000 babies and children across the UK.

To find out more, visit www.medequip4kids.org.uk or call 0161 798 1600 /info@medequip4kids.org.uk

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