**Play in Hospital Week 2020**

**How we have continued to “Play well together” during Covid**

Play in hospital week this year is going to be different to any other. This year we have decided to promote our profession by writing an article explaining how we have continued providing play during these trying times and how important this has been not only to the children but also parents and the MDT.

Going back to when it all began and things started to change drastically with the playroom being closed and restrictions of toys and equipment being enforced. The play team at Ninewells adapted very quickly on the ward making disposable activity packs for children and adapting our toy washing policy incorporating new guidelines so we could still provide children with toys to play with. Our play assistants continued to offer play activities out in the bays ensuring children had the all important play opportunities and allowing parents to have a break. This is important under normal circumstances however during this time the need somehow became far greater to provide children with the much needed normality of play. The hospital environment became even more of an alien environment with the MDT wearing face masks and on occasions PPE, doctors were no longer wearing their normal clothes and were in scrubs. Play Specialists adapted preparation tools with pictures of people in PPE and step by step aids of what to expect during procedures, Play specialists accompanied children where possible providing distraction and support. Thus allowing doctors, Anaesthetists and nurses to carry out the required procedure (occasionally in full PPE) knowing the child was well supported.

We also continued to provide play opportunities through in the children’s outpatient department and clinical investigation unit. Our play room was no longer in use therefore our Play assistants made activity packs for all ages of children giving them something to do while waiting to be seen and that could then be taken home with the child. Colourful displays were also made for all doctors rooms as children would be waiting in these rooms instead of the waiting/play area. The displays were then changed regularly by the play *assistants ensuring the children have a bright welcoming and stimulating* environment to be seen in. Children who were attending CIU for longer periods of time were provided with toys and activities during their stay.

As well as continuing to provide play for the children and supporting families the play team also helped out the MDT by making white boards to go outside every side room so as nurses and doctors could write down what they needed to say and hold up to the door rather than donning and undonning of PPE every time. The boards came in useful for the parents too. A break out room was also created for staff providing somewhere to come when feeling overwhelmed. Play staff decorated the room with motivational quotes and a board to write down people’s hopes for the future to boost moral between staff. We also made smile behind the mask badges which were badges with the member of staffs photo on and name. This allowed the child to see what the person looks like without their mask.

The play team at Ninewells worked hard during this time continuing to provide a high standard play service all be it slightly adapted. It was so important that the children still had access to normalising play and play preparation for procedures. Ensuring anxieties were kept at a minimum, thus allowing them to have that little bit of fun during their hospital stay which hopefully resulted in a positive experience.

Moving forward the play service continues to adapt as restrictions are slowly being relaxed, we are dedicated to continue to provide play in hospital for all children ensuring we always “Play well together”.