

## Miracles of the Mind

Imagine how it must feel to be told that your unborn baby is unlikely to survive birth and that even if he does survive, he has a condition that will severely limit his quality of life.

Sally Hincliffe from Poole, Dorset was faced with just this situation following a pre-natal scan. Faced with the devastating news, Sally and her husband Ian prepared themselves for the worst case scenario whilst trying to remain positive.

Tom was diagnosed with two separate conditions Ventriculomegaly and Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum (ACC).

Ventriculomegaly is a condition where the ventricles in the brain are too large. The brain has four fluid filled spaces (ventricles) that communicate with each other. Baby's ventricles are usually about 7mm in the brain, and 15mm is considered abnormally large. Tom's measure 35mm and it was the extent of Tom's condition that led to the concern that he would not survive birth.



Tom was also diagnosed with Agenesis of the Corpus Callosum (ACC), a rare neurological condition in which the Corpus Callosum, the major "pathway" for information that links the two hemispheres of the brain, fails to develop fully. The effects of the condition can be variable; ranging from normal development (where the condition may be undetected or be revealed incidentally) or mild developmental delay, to severe learning difficulties, epilepsy, visual impairment and delayed motor development.

Sally researched the condition and made contact with Corpal, a non-profit support group and charity run by parents, families and carers of children who have ACC, to find out as much as she could about the disorder. She also investigated things she could do to help Tom and during her research, came across the Baby Sensory website, which offers developmental support to parents.

The Baby Sensory programme was founded by Dr. Lin Day (PhD, Dip. Ed, BSc. PGCE. M. Phil) and is designed specifically for babies from birth. The programme incorporates a wide range of sensory activities that stimulate the senses and helps babies develop in every possible way.

Sally decided to attend a session to see whether the programme could help Tom, then 7 weeks old. "I was quite nervous about taking Tom to the class. It is really difficult as a parent when

your newborn baby is different to other babies. Within minutes of meeting the Class Leader Nim and all the other parents, I was made to feel a part of the group."

Each week the themed sessions include different activities designed to aid early brain development for babies from birth to 13 months of age. Although Tom sometimes sleeps during the second half of the session, Sally is able to understand the developmental benefits of the activities and is able to use them at home to ensure that Tom gets the full benefit of the programme.

"On many occasions I have noticed that Tom has a breakthrough and is able to do something new in the day following the Baby Sensory session. Although his physical development is still a little slow, he is ahead of many of the mental development milestones used by the Health Profession to assess baby development. I am sure that the Baby Sensory programme has made a significant contribution to his progress" continues Sally.

Baby Sensory founder Dr Lin Day says "When I developed the Baby Sensory programme, I wanted to ensure that every baby could benefit from the activities. It is so rewarding when you hear a story like Tom's and it just proves how clever babies can be. Sally and Ian are doing a remarkable job and their story shows what can be achieved during the vital first year given the love and support of devoted parents."