

Early Help



Walsall Council



Children's Services

Mellow Parenting – Detailed Information Sheet for Social Workers and Early Help professionals

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Information on the Mellow organisation:

Mellow Parenting is a family of specialist group parenting programmes developed to support parents and their children in making good relationships. The Mellow parenting programmes have been designed and researched to an evidence base level by the Scottish based organisation - Mellow. Mellow offers training and licences to professionals to train to deliver the Mellow Programmes to parents.

The foundation of all the Mellow programmes is attachment theory with particular emphasis on the transmission of attachment and relationship styles across generations. “So, if you have had poor relationships with carers in your early childhood, evidence shows that it is harder to make good relationships now, with services, partners and of course your children” (mellowparenting.org)

Aims & How the programme works:

Mellow Parenting is based on the assumption that parenting behaviours are influenced by the quality of parents’ relationship with their own parents. Damaged or insecure relationships with one’s own parents can lead to feelings of depression and the inability to parent effectively. Mellow Parenting also assumes that when parents can safely explore their childhood experiences and relationships with others, they are in a better position to repair difficult feelings that may interfere with their ability to understand their child, and respond to him or her in a way that is sensitive and nurturing. Sensitive parenting, in turn, will support the child’s wellbeing and general development.

Short-term goals:

In the short term, it is expected that:

- The parent will be more confident
- The child will be more confident
- There will be more positive parent and child interaction
- There will be less negative parent and child interaction.

Long-term goals:

In the long term, it is expected that:

- The parents will be happier
- The child will be happier
- There will be more positive parent and child interaction
- There will be less negative parent and child interaction
- The child will be removed from the child protection register
- The child will have improved physical and intellectual development
- Parents will experience greater self-efficacy
- Parents will have greater self-confidence and self-esteem
- Parents will be more competent as parents.

Through Mellow group attendance – parent’s wellbeing is increased as the programme is based on the assumption that parenting behaviours are influenced by

the quality of parents' relationship with their own parents. Damaged or insecure relationships with one's own parents can lead to feelings of depression and the inability for that person to parent their own children effectively. Mellow Parenting gives a forum for parents to be empowered to safely explore their childhood experiences and relationships with others, resulting in parents being in a better position to repair difficult feelings that may interfere with their ability to understand themselves and their child. It also encourages parents to respond to children in a way that is sensitive and nurturing. Sensitive parenting, in turn, is evidenced to support the child's wellbeing and overall general development. Parents who have engaged in Mellow Parenting are usually in a better position to make choices and problem solve within their own lives and areas of parenting, parents are inspired from Mellow Parenting groups and realise they are capable of making changes to their lives which could lead to healthy choices around substance and alcohol use, healthier relationships and a reduction of inequality for some of the most vulnerable families in Walsall.

Further information about the charitable organisation Mellow.org the Mellow programmes, and evidence can also be found on Mellow website: <http://www.mellowparenting.org/>.

How Mellow came to Walsall:

Mellow parenting programme practitioner training was commissioned in Walsall for a number of Walsall staff under the 'Walsall Way of Parenting' Parenting Strategy. Walsall's Parenting Strategy was designed and ratified by a group of senior multi agency leads in Walsall in 2011 and the strategy was in place for 4years. The Parenting Strategy task group commissioned **universal** parenting programme staff training in: Teen Triple P, SFSC and Understanding Your Child and the **specialist** Mellow Parenting programme training. The Mellow programmes were brought into Walsall to be offered to parents needing specialist provision – i.e. any Walsall parents level 4 (with a social worker) and a child under 5 years where it is assessed by the social worker/agencies involved that Mellow would likely benefit the family to further ensure children remain in their parents care.

Mellow runs with single sex groups (as per our licence agreement with Mellow) and runs either as Mellow Mums group programme or Mellow Dads group programme. There is also provision for Mellow Bumps - 6 week group for mums antenatal between 20-30weeks gestation, however it has been a struggle to find enough mums with extra health and social care needs to run the Mellow Bumps at one time in Walsall. The groups were initially only offered in Walsall to mums as Mellow Mums due to lack of male practitioners, but in 2013 one male practitioner was recruited to the training. There is also a Mellow programme – Mellow futures for parents with learning difficulties – this has not been brought into Walsall as yet.

The Mellow training, and resource delivery is currently funded by Parenting Team /The Parenting Strategy which also includes Public Health funding. The group is of high cost with each Mellow group ranging from £3000 – 5000 pounds per group – approx £500-600 per parent. The majority of cost is spent on childcare workers and transport for parents.

Who runs Mellow:

Mellow parenting is part of the Early Help Locality Team parenting offer. The parenting offer from locality teams is made up of direct one to one work around parenting, parenting

workshops, access to online parenting programmes and access to places on the specialist Mellow parenting programme. Locality Mellow Parenting practitioners are in the main Family Support Workers in each of the four locality areas: Blakenall (north), Darlaston (west), Palfrey (south) and Birchills (central and east).

The Mellow Training:

A training pre-requisite for Mellow is that all applicants for the Mellow parenting programme training must prove they have substantial experience working with complex and vulnerable families. All applicants complete pre training assessments and attended information meetings before undertaking Mellow training. Practitioners attend an intensive three days of pre-service training covering the theoretical basis of the programme, its content and methods for observing parent/child interaction. They also receive a comprehensive practitioner's manual and are trained to observe parent child interactions and how to feedback the embryonic skills observed to parents in a way that encourages their engagement.

Accreditation:

Practitioners receive a certificate stating that they have attended the three-day Mellow Parenting core training programme. However to receive accreditation as a Mellow Practitioner, certificates are only awarded once the practitioners have completed their first parenting group under supervision from a Mellow Parenting supervisor, along with a recommendation from their Mellow Parenting supervisor. Practitioners also attend 3 clinical supervision sessions with an independent Consultant Clinical Psychologist.

Mellow Core Programmes - Mellow Mums and Mellow Dads and a quick outline of the Mellow day:

The Core Mellow Parenting Programme is a specialist 14-week intensive evidence-based Parenting group programme that is run in single sex groups as either Mellow Mums or Mellow Dads group. The group runs for one day a week for 14 weeks with usually 12 mums or 12 dads. A Dads group must have a male practitioner as part of the Mellow facilitation team as per our licence agreement with Mellow. The personal groups/workshops are never mixed sexes as per Mellows licence condition. The Mellow day will usually run between 9.30 to 2.45pm and is usually term time only. The Mellow day consists of a parent's morning personal group, a therapeutic lunch and lunch time activity for parent and at least one of their children (child must attend either all day or over lunch time) and a parenting workshop in the afternoon. Children are in children's group whilst the parent attends personal group in the morning and parenting workshop in the afternoon. Parents are transported into the group by taxis and all food is provided. The mellow Childrens group is run by Level 3 qualified childcare workers provided through Walsall Council's agency – Starting Point. The cost per parent to attend mellow is around £750 per parent.

Referral, recruitment and criteria:

Referrals are typically made by social workers and Early Help Lead professionals involved in the delivery of services for children and families. A standard Mellow referral form is available from the parenting team or is downloadable along with a Mellow leaflet from the Mellow pages on the parenting website: webwalsall.com/childrens-services/parent/parenting. The referral process will soon be changing to be Mosaic referral form.

Prior to the start of the programme, the practitioner meets with each family in their home. During this visit the practitioner describes the programme and discusses how it may support the family's journey. If parents agree to participate, their details are collected and they are offered a place on the next available Mellow mums/ Mellow dads group. If parents present as particularly anxious about attending Mellow, sometimes a number of home visits can be undertaken prior to the group starting, dependent upon work pressures of the team at that time.

The criteria parents must meet to be offered a Mellow place:

Mellow Parenting is for parents with complex needs, including child protection concerns with a child under the age of ten. The definition of complex needs is broad, but in the main this is Toxic Trio issues and poor parenting experiences, and or trauma in one's own childhood. However it can include issues such as depression, anxiety disorders and histories of unhealthy relationships, or failed attempts at universal parenting programmes.

Parent should not attend if it is clear that their problems will interfere with their ability to participate in the programme. For example, mothers with very severe substance misuse problems cannot attend until their substance misusing behaviours are under control.

The criteria for inclusion in Mellow Mums group or Mellow Dads groups in Walsall has been developed and agreed as follows:

- Level 3 / 4 parent (open to a Walsall social worker who has agreed for referral to Mellow or Early Help parent with Lead Professional and completed Early Help Assessment)
- Be a parent with Toxic Trio –(mental health issues, domestic abuse, substance dependency), involvement in Child Protection or with their own histories of being poorly parented (i.e care leavers).
- Be a parent that has voluntarily consented to attend the Mellow programme.
- Have at least one child (10 years or under) able to attend the Mellow Group therapeutic lunch time session (1hour) each week for the duration of the Mellow group (14weeks). Preferably this is younger children in the family; however older children can be catered for if school agree.
- Have the full time care of, or regular contact with one or more of their children (either supervised or unsupervised) with an envisaged plan for the parent to eventually have permanent full time care of their child/children.

Parent engagement is encouraged through personally meaningful discussions with other parents and engagement is supported by the practitioner's ability to form a supportive relationship with the parents and foster a sense of hope for parents. For this reason it is imperative that if parents do not have the full time care of the children, it is part of the social workers plan for the children to eventually (in the fairly short term) return to the parents care. It is suggested that social workers referring parents to Mellow believe it is more than 70% likely that the parent will in the fairly short term receive the full time care of their child/children. Mellow is not sufficient as a parenting programme to enrich contact between parents and the 'looked after' child.

The Mellow Day in Detail:

The Mellow Parenting programmes run in single sex groups of about 12 parents per group (maximum is approx 14 parents) and the programme includes Mellow Dads (14-week full day a week group), Mellow Mums (14-week full day group) and Mellow Babies (parent of a 18 month child or under) 14-week full day group. The Mellow day always includes

Personal Group in the morning, **therapeutic lunchtime activity/lunch** and **Parenting Workshop** in the afternoon.

Personal Group Core Sessions

Personal Group runs in the Mellow day morning session for approx 1.5 hours. The content of the personal workshops includes seven core sessions that must be delivered at the following points of the mellow programme. The core topics/sessions are:

- Week 1: Introductions
- Week 2: Who am I? Parents reflect on their feelings and emotions
- Week 3: Trust – Parents identify situations where they could trust someone and times they may have been let down
- Week 4: My family then and now - Parents bring photos from their childhood to discuss links between their past and current circumstances
- Week 5: Life stories – Each parent puts together a story of their life and shares it with the group
- Week 11: Parents think about their goals for the future and identify resources and strategies for working towards their goals
- Week 14: Where are we now? During the final session, parents reflect back on what they have learned over the previous weeks.

There are also a number of optional/tailor made personal group topics that facilitators can choose to use following assessment of parents/groups needs and will deliver on the other personal groups sessions (week 6 to 10 and week 13).

- You and your body
- Pregnancy and birth
- Child protection
- Violence in the home
- Assertiveness
- Getting angry
- Relaxation
- Body image
- Friendships
- Cuddles
- Understanding depression
- What are we scared of?

Therapeutic Lunch Time:

At lunchtime the parent and child eat a healthy lunch together and this is followed by a therapeutic lunch time activity between the parent and the child such as messy play, making music, simple cooking, story time and outdoor activities. The Lunchtime session runs for approx 1.5 hours. The parent is supported by the Mellow practitioners, childcare workers and additional sessional workers during this time, who support, monitor and encourage positive interaction between parent and the child and encourage the parent to implement strategies learned during the parent workshop.

Parents Workshop and Videoing:

The afternoon session comprises of a parent workshop covering strategies and discussions around effective behaviour management, child self regulation, parent-child relationships and child development such as how to play, importance of sleep, routines, healthy eating and strategies for becoming a sensitive nurturing parent. Parents are also videoed prior to attending the Mellow group at 'hot spot' times such as meal time/ bed time with the children,

and these tapes are played to parents during the parent workshop where positive embryonic skills are highlighted to the parents. Also during this time, the parents can discuss their success with the weekly 'Have a Go!' homework tasks assigned to them.

The following topics are covered over the 14 weeks of Mellow parenting workshop sessions:

- Understanding parenting
- Child watching
- Everyone is keeping them busy! (discussion of the videotapes)
- Keeping them busy (discussion about play)
- Spotting trouble before it spots you
- Child development
- Changing your child's behaviour
- Stopping behaviour you don't want
- Tempers, tantrums and funny turns
- No one likes a whining child
- Feelings
- Brothers and sisters
- Toys and play.

Mellow Transport – Parents and children are currently transported to the group via Walsall council approved taxi companies. Children transported over lunch time are transported by taxi along with an escort, Mellow facilitators will prepare parents and children before the group about the transport arrangements.

The transport of parents and children is overseen by Walsall Council Home School Transport Team

If necessary you can discuss approved transport arrangement with the team 08:00 and 16:45 Monday – Friday and Telephone 01922 653761 or 01922 653762

Mellow facilitators will organise the taxi of parents and children following first meeting.

Parents can expect the following from the approved taxi company

All drivers/passenger assistants and escorts will:

- Wear identification badges
- Have an enhanced DBS check
- Have a reasonable grasp of the English language
- Have read and understood the Passenger Safety Plan
- Be presentable and have a clean appearance
- Treat students/parents/carers in a respectful and courteous manner
- The vehicle provided will be fit for purpose and the company will make a replacement vehicle available should this be required
- The vehicle provided is always operated to a high standard of cleanliness
- All seats in vehicles have a working seatbelt, and passenger restraints and wheelchair securing devices are provided as required
- Drivers/passenger assistants are fully trained in operating any ancillary equipment fitted to a vehicle e.g. tail lift, wheelchair securing equipment, passenger harnesses etc.
- Drivers provide a high standard of driving
- Drivers/passenger assistants are aware of their duties and responsibilities, particularly in the event of an emergency
- Drivers/passenger assistants do not smoke during the performance of the contract

- Upon arrival at the agreed collection or drop-off time, drivers wait for up to three minutes
- Drivers/passenger assistants keep parents/carers informed of any significant delay to transport
- Transport companies avoid, where possible, changes in drivers/passenger assistants.

Mellow Evidence – National Research / Evidence Base of Group Effectiveness:

1. Population, study design and measures Study 1. Puckering et al. (1994)

Twenty-one mothers with severe parenting difficulties, including 12 with children on the child protection register, participated in coded videotaped sessions before and after participating in the Mellow Parenting programme.

Outcomes: Significant positive changes in the mothers' parenting behaviours were observed during the videotaped sessions. Ten of the 12 children on the child protection register subsequently had their names removed.

Puckering, C., Rogers, J., Mills, M., and Cox, A.D. ((1994). Process and evaluation of a group intervention for mothers with parenting difficulties. *Child Abuse Review*, 3, 199 – 310.

2. Mellow Parenting programmes breaks negative cycles and builds good relationships.

It has been evidenced to improve:

- Parent-child interaction.
- Child behaviour problems.
- Parents' wellbeing.
- Parents' effectiveness.
- Child development.
- Self-esteem and confidence.
- Children's language development.

Dept of Health 2006, Scottish Government 2009

Other Evidence sources of Mellow's effectiveness:

Puckering, C, Longford, J and Hickey, A 'National programme for improving Mental Health and Wellbeing - Mellow Babies in Small Research Project Initiatives 2005-06 - ISBN 978-0-7559-5758-3

Puckering C, Rogers J, Mills M, Cox AD, Mattsson-Graff M, Process and evaluation of a group Intervention for Mothers with Parenting Difficulties

Puckering C, Evans J, Maddox H, Mills M, Cox AD Taking Control: A Single Case Study of Mellow Parenting –

Mind the Gap! Helping Children of Mothers with Post Natal Depression

Puckering C, The Signal – Mellow Parenting: An Intensive Intervention to Change

Relationships

Puckering C, Parenting in Social and Economic Adversity

All above evidence papers are available from Parenting team. Please contact Georgina Atkins – AtkinsG@walsall.gov.uk for copies.

Local Evidence of Effectiveness

3.1 Evidence of Effectiveness – Local Evidence Year 1:

Local Evidence from 4 Mellow Mums Groups Delivered in Walsall September 2012 to February 2013:

Parent Demographic:

76% of mellow parents were in touch with a health professional – counsellor/psychiatrist and 62% recorded regularly being in contact with a Social Worker.

76% were not in employment and 52% recorded they had no educational qualifications.

All parents were highlighted as meeting at least one area of the Mellow criteria – substance abuse, mental health issue, involved in Child Protection, domestic abuse and/or had a history of being poorly parented themselves.

Clinical Pre and Post Data from Mellow Parents:

Measured 9 areas of parenting that cover parents wellbeing and parent/child relationships:

Area 1 – parents perception of challenging behaviour, Area 2 – child problem behaviour, Area 3 – unmanageable parenting tasks, Area 4 – perceived hassle of being a parent, Area 5 – behaviour problem checklist, Area 6 – parents style – Laxness and parents Over Reactivity levels, Areas 7, 8 and 9 – parents level of Depression, parents level of Anxiety and parents level of Stress.

34% of Mellow parents had 9 out of 9 significantly positive moves in all 9 areas post the Mellow group attendance.

22% of Mellow parents had 7 or 8 significantly positive moves out of the 9 areas post the Mellow group attendance.

22 % of Mellow parents had 5 out of 9 significantly positive moves out of the 9 areas post the Mellow group attendance.

22% of parents had 3 or 4 significantly positive moves out of the 9 areas post the Mellow group attendance.

0% of parents had no positive move or less than 2 moves on the nine areas post the programme.

Links with Objectives:

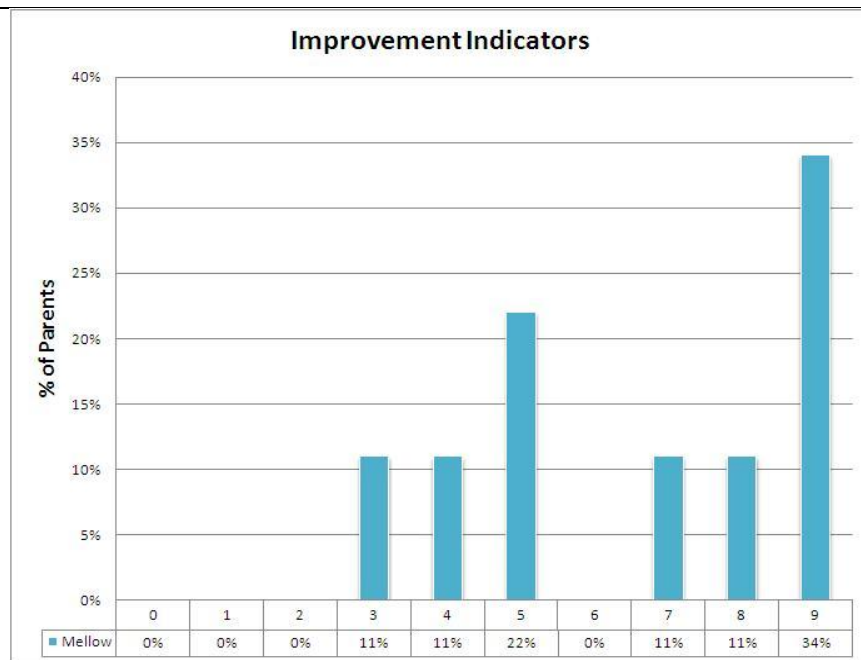
Parents reported a reduction of half in child emotional and behaviour problems post the group.

Parents reported a reduction in their own Stress, Anxiety and Depression and greater understanding of feelings and relationships.

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Parents reported a reduction in their own Stress, Anxiety and Depression and greater understanding of feelings and relationships.

From qualitative data we know many parents went on to college courses, went back into work, become volunteers or had started to think about a plan for the future post the programme.



3.2 Evidence of Effectiveness – Local Evidence Year 2:

Local Evidence from x 5 Mellow Mums Groups and x 1 Mellow DADS Group Delivered in Walsall November 2013 to July 2014

Parent Demographic:

69% of Mellow parents were regularly in touch with a professional.

93% were not in employment and 37% recorded they had no educational qualifications and 47% recorded they had some GCSE's.

All parents were highlighted as meeting at least one area of the Mellow criteria – substance abuse, mental health issue, involved in Child Protection, domestic abuse and/or a history of being poorly parented themselves.

Clinical Pre and Post Data from Mellow Parents :

Parents reported on 9 areas of negative problems and were asked to rate if they had the problems before the group and if they still had the problems now. This included the following:

Lack of self confidence, 'putting myself down', depression, 'feeling bad about myself', 'feeling I'm not as good as other people', Not trusting, 'finding it hard to get on with my partner', 'finding hard to get on with my children, 'getting the children to do what I asked'.

60% of parents scored 5 or more negative problem areas before the group and only 1 parent scored 5 or more post the group.

71.8% felt the hassle of parenting reduced post the group.

Links with Objectives:

87.5 % recorded decrease in depression or remained in normal ranges.

82.5 % recorded decrease in anxiety or remained in normal ranges.

80 % recorded decrease in stress or remained in normal ranges.

65.7% parents recorded reduction in child problem behaviour post Mellow Parenting programme.

37% parents state they are able to stay calmer with improved skills and knowledge on parenting

24% state they have greater confidence.

3.3 Qualitative Outcome data:

Parents who have attended Mellow Parenting has shown a number of parents have since gone on from Mellow to join Home Start as volunteers, start College or return to work. Qualitative data available upon request from the Parenting Team. Qualitative Data includes:

Q post group: have you changed in your behaviour	%
Yes	93%
Partly	2%
No	2%
Didn't State	2%
Grand Total	100%

Q post group: How has your behaviour changed	%
Get less frustrated and stay calm	37%
More confident	24%
Listen to my children more	10%
More understanding of child behaviour and development	8%
No Change	2%
Not completed	18%
Grand Total	100%

Q post group: What did you hope to get out of the group?	%
Improving knowledge and parenting skills	37%
Getting on better with my child	18%
More understanding of child behaviour and development	10%
Good confidence	8%
Making new friend	4%
Don't know	2%
Not completed	20%
Grand Total	100%

Full evaluation analysis reports on Walsall Mellow parenting group is available from Public Health and Walsall parenting Team.

Report prepared by: Georgina Atkins –Parenting Lead

Children Services, Early Help – Parenting

Georgina Atkins, Amy Hayes– 01922 650719

Mobile: 07908242162

Email: walsallwayofparenting@walsall.gov.uk

website: web.walsall.gov.uk/childrens-services/parent/