

EARLY HELP SUPPORTING FAMILIES



Mellow Parenting:

Detailed Information Sheet for
Social Workers and Early Help Professionals

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1. 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” (www.mellowparenting.org)

Information on Walsall’s Mellow offer can be found here [Families supported by children's services \(walsall.gov.uk\)](http://www.walsall.gov.uk/families-supported-by-childrens-services)

2. Aims of Mellow Programme & 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 – parents' wellbeing is increased - 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. 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.

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

3. 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 Mellow's licence condition.

The Mellow day will usually run between 9.30am to 2.45pm and is usually term time only. The Mellow day consists of a parents' 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, children can be transported from school for lunch time activity with their parent and all food is provided.

The Mellow facilitators are trained and accredited facilitators with past experience of working with complex and vulnerable parents. The Mellow children's group is run by Level 3 Qualified Childcare Workers provided through Walsall Council's agency, Starting Point. The approximate cost per parent to attend Mellow is around £750-£800 (not including a staffing cost). Supervised contact arrangements can be supported through Mellow group.

4. Referral, Recruitment and the Walsall Criteria for Mellow

Referral:

Referrals are typically made by Social Workers and Early Help Lead Professionals involved in the delivery of services for children and families. Families with Need level 3 and Need level 4 can be offered a place on Mellow. See Right Help Right Time guidance [Early Help Partnership \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/early-help-partnership).

Mellow referrals can be sent through Mosaic to the Multi-Agency Early Help Hub Team. The Hub team can be contacted on 0300 555 2866 option 1. For case discussions on the Mellow programme Social Workers can contact the Hub at EarlyHelpParentingTeam@walsall.gov.uk.

Early Help Workers & Social Workers should in the first instance talk to Line Managers/ Locality Leads. Mosaic Support Team can also support referral generation to the Mellow Lead team on Mosaic through the Service Request Form.

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 10. The definition of complex needs is broad, but in the main this is trio of vulnerability 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 numerous failed attempts at universal parenting programmes like Understanding Your Child group.

Parents 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:

- Parent open to Walsall Children Services, Level 3/4 need. The Mellow offer is made to parents with children on a Plan such as Early Help Plan, Child in Need or Child Protection Plan). See Right Help Right Time Guidance here [Early Help Partnership \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/early-help-partnership)
- Be a parent with additional vulnerabilities such as (mental health issues, domestic abuse, substance dependency), involvement in Child Protection or with their own histories of being poorly parented, i.e. adults who are 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 (1 hour) each week for the duration of the Mellow group (14 weeks). Preferably this is younger children in the family; however, older children can be catered for if the school agrees for release of child during school day.
- 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(ren).

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. Parents also spend time re-building attachments with children through lunch time's therapeutic activities. For this reason it is imperative that if parents do not have the full time care of the children, they should not be put on Mellow unless it is part of the Social Workers plan for the children to return to the parents' care. It is suggested that Social Workers referring parents to Mellow should believe it is more than 70% likely that the parent will in the fairly short term receive the full time care of their child/ren.

Mellow is not sufficient as a parenting programme to enrich contact between parents and a 'looked after' child, neither can it be considered a parenting assessment programme.

5. The Mellow Day in Detail:

The Mellow Parenting programmes run in single sex groups of about 12 parents per group (maximum is 14 parents) and the programme includes Mellow Dads (14-week full day a week group), Mellow Mums (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 7 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 the parents'/the group's needs - (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 approximately 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

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, 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.

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 Assistant; 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 Transport Team.

If necessary, you can discuss approved transport arrangement with the team 08:00 and 16:45 Monday – Friday on 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 3 minutes.
- Drivers/Passenger Assistants keep parents/carers informed of any significant delay to transport.
- Transport companies avoid, where possible, changes in Drivers/Passenger Assistants.

6. 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 4 years. The Parenting Strategy Task Group commissioned '**Universal**' Parenting Programme staff training in, 'Teen Triple P', 'Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities' 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 and to support reduction of children Looked After across Walsall.

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.

Mellow Bumps

There is also provision for Mellow Bumps, a 6 week group for mums ante-natal between 20-30 weeks gestation currently delivered from the Health Visitor – Health in Pregnancy Team (refer pregnant mums through the Early Help Hub- 0300 555 2866 option 1).

See Mellow Bumps information here: [Health in pregnancy \(walsall.gov.uk\)](https://www.walsall.gov.uk/health-in-pregnancy)

7. Who runs Mellow - The Mellow Training, Accreditation and Licence

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 experienced Family Support Workers & Seniors in each of the four locality areas, North, West, Central and South and East Localities.

The Mellow Training:

A training pre-requisite for Mellow is that all applicants for the Mellow Parenting programme practitioner 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 training delivered by Mellow parenting [Programmes - Mellow Parenting](#) 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 3-day Mellow

Parenting Core training programme. However to receive accreditation as a Mellow Practitioner, an additional Practitioner certificate is only awarded once the practitioners have completed their first parenting group under supervision from a Mellow Parenting Supervisor. Practitioners also attend 3 Clinical Supervision sessions with an independent Consultant Clinical Psychologist whilst delivering Mellow Groups. Mellow practitioners licences are renewed every 2 years.

Funding:

The Mellow training, and resource delivery is currently funded by the Early Help Parenting Team which also includes Public Health funding. The group is of high cost although the majority of cost is spent on childcare workers, food and transport for parents.

8. National Evaluation on Mellow

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

21 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. 10 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:

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

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, Mattson-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.

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

Puckering C, Parenting in Social and Economic Adversity.

9. Local Evidence on Mellow:

Mellow Parenting – Mellow Mums and Mellow Dads Face to Face Impact Data:

Impact evaluation – Mellow Mums and Mellow Dads

From Walsall's clinical evaluation of parenting programmes (using standardised scientific measures), data of four Mellow Groups showed:

- Parents report a reduction in half of the child emotional behaviour (*SDQ*) problems post Mellow
- Significant reduction in parents stress, anxiety and depression (*DAS21*) and greater understanding of feelings and relationships was evidenced.

From Walsall clinical evaluation of six Mellow Groups 2013/2014 showed:

- 93% of parents reported a behaviour change in their behaviour with 37% reporting they were able to stay calmer and had improved parenting skills post-Mellow group.
- 72% of parents experience reduction in parenting hassles (*DH Parenting Hassle scale*)
- 88% experience reduced depression or stay within normal ranges (*DAS21*)
- 83% experience reduced anxiety or stay within normal range
- 80% have a stress reduction or stay within normal range
- 66% report reduced child problem behaviour

From Length of Stay analysis by David Zhu Children's Data Analyst- Mellow groups ran 2016/ 2017 showed:

- If parents had completed Mellow parenting, children were 25% less likely to go into local authority care
- If children were in local authority care and their parent had completed Mellow parenting, children were 'looked after' for a significantly shorter period of time as opposed to parents that had not completed Mellow.

Mellow evaluation March 2018 from 4 Mellow Groups (49 parents – x3 Mellow Mums groups and 1x Mellow Dads group) showed:

- 80% of parents are level 4 (CIN and CP) with 20% Level 3 Early Help
- Programme retention stands at 60% (parents not missing more than 4 sessions out of 14)
- 50% of parents have had a step down at post group
- 54% parents post mellow report behaviour change for the better
- 62% report positive behaviour change with their children post mellow
- 89% report the group helped them
- 72% of parents had a decrease in confidence problems, relationship problems post mellow

Mellow Evaluation March 2019 from 6 Mellow Groups (51 parents – x 4 Mellow Mums and 1x Mellow Dads group showed:

- 82% of parents are level 4 (CP & CIN) being the most common plan for parents
- 50% of parents have had a step down at 6months post the programme (35% had a step down at the end of the 14 week programme) with the most common step down being CIN to Universal, these parents had not had a step up in service at a further 3 month follow up (9 months)
- 89% of parents say the group has helped them
- 55% reduction in the group's number of confidence/relationship problems post mellow
- 90% of the parents say the group helped them with their specific problem – specific problems listed by parents as below:

The children's Dad
Confidence -7 parents responses around confidence
Childrens behaviour -9 responses around Childrens behaviour
Children services
No understanding my child 2 responses
No relationship with my child 2 responses.
Not feeling a fit mother
Not being able to trust others
Anger issues – 2 parents responses around anger
Domestic Abuse
Not trusting social services
Not seeing my child
Finding it hard to talk about the past
Worried my children are going to be taken away

Mellow 2019 Qualitative feedback from parents to the question 'did the group help' (optional feedback question)

Qualitative responses to "Did the group help?"

Group 1 Mellow Mums	Yes, made a great support group.
	Being around other people that have similar situations and just being understood by others.
	Made me realise others have problems and it is okay.
	Got me more confident and to understand X (child) emotionally more.
	Remain calm during son's outbursts.
	To get on with people.
Group 2 Mellow Mums	Explaining that things not suitable for children.
	Given me more insight into how a child behaves and the reasons why and how children develops.
	Yes, being in group has helped with confidence and opening up.
	Yes, it has made me realise I can do it and to trust myself.
Group 3 Mellow Mums	Give me coping strategies.
	The children listen more.
	By listening to others' stories makes me feel like I'm fit to be a mother.
	To understand I'm not alone.
Group 4 Mellow Mums	Mellow has changed me. I'm confident now. I believe in myself. I am a good mom now.
	I've enjoyed Mellow. I am more positive with my eldest child now; we actually have a positive relationship. I see every day as a fresh start which has helped him behave better.
	Before I used to just meet my kid's basic care needs like wash and feed them. Now I understand how to show and tell them that I love them and how to help manage their feelings. That's important too.
	I know I have messed up before and that's on me but I'm not going to let my past stop me from being a good mom now.
Group 5 Mellow Dads	Yes to think of how things affect my kids and to be a better parent.
	Yes, enlightening education.
	Yes, I've learn a lot about child development and dealing with problems whilst feeling frustrated.
Group 6 Mellow Dads	Helped me feel better.
	Gave me a better understanding of abuse and its effect on children.

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