

## GUIDEBOOK

Published January 2023

Downloaded from <https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programme/mellow-toddlers>

# Mellow Toddlers

Review: [Foundations for Life](#), July 2016

**Note on provider involvement:** This provider has agreed to EIF's terms of reference, and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the programme provider.

**Mellow Toddlers is a group-based programme delivered to mothers or fathers (separate groups for each) with identified parenting difficulties and who have a child between the ages of one and three.**

Parents attend 14 weekly sessions (five hours' duration each), and are also visited in their homes before the programme to introduce parents to the programme and videotape their interaction with their child for use in future sessions.

Each session involves a reflective group in the morning and a parenting workshop based on strengths-based video feedback in the afternoon. 'Have a go' activities are given at the end of sessions to encourage parents to apply what they have learned in the home.

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Evidence  
rating: **2**

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Cost rating: **2**

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## EIF Programme Assessment

Mellow Toddlers has **preliminary evidence** of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the programme caused the improvement.

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Evidence  
rating: **2**

### What does the evidence rating mean?

**Level 2** indicates that the programme has evidence of improving a child outcome from a study involving at least 20 participants, representing 60% of the sample, using validated instruments.

This programme does not receive a rating of 3 as its best evidence is not from a rigorously conducted RCT or QED evaluation.

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## Cost rating

A rating of 2 indicates that a programme has a medium-low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of £100–£499.

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Cost rating: **2**

# Child outcomes

According to the best available evidence for this programme's impact, it can achieve the following positive outcomes for children:

## Enhancing school achievement & employment

### Improved child IQ

Based on study 1a

## Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour

### Improved child behaviour

Based on study 1a

This programme also has evidence of supporting positive outcomes for couples, parents or families that may be relevant to a commissioning decision. Please see the 'About the evidence' section for more detail.

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## Key programme characteristics

### Who is it for?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to the following age-groups:

- Toddlers

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### How is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to implementation through these delivery models:

- Group

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### Where is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

- Home
  - Children's centre or early-years setting
  - Primary school
  - Community centre
  - Out-patient health setting
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## How is it targeted?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation as:

- Targeted indicated
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## Where has it been implemented?

United Kingdom

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## UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

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## UK evaluation

This programme's best evidence includes evaluation conducted in the UK.

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## Spotlight sets

EIF includes this programme in the following Spotlight sets:

- parenting programmes with violence reduction outcomes
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## About the programme

### What happens during delivery?

#### How is it delivered?

- Six mothers and their children attend 14 weekly sessions that are delivered by two practitioners. Each session takes place over a period of five hours.

### What happens during the intervention?

- At each of the 14 sessions, during the morning part of the session, mothers participate in group discussions where they explore how their personal histories with their own parents are impacting their current relationship with their children.
- The mothers then receive coaching on how to interact with their child during the lunch session.
- In the afternoon, the practitioners lead a group discussion of videotapes of the mothers interacting with their children.
- 'Have a go' activities are given at the end of sessions to encourage parents to apply what they have learned in the home.

### What are the implementation requirements?

#### Who can deliver it?

- This programme is delivered by two practitioners, both are family support workers/early years practitioners/health visitors with QCF-4/5 qualifications.

### What are the training requirements?

- The practitioners have 21 hours of programme training. Booster training of practitioners is recommended.

## How are the practitioners supervised?

- It is recommended that practitioners are supervised by two host-agency supervisors (qualified to QCF-6 level), and one host-agency supervisor.

## What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

- Fidelity is maintained through the supervision process.

## Is there a licensing requirement?

There is no licence required to run this programme.

## How does it work? (Theory of Change)

### How does it work?

- Mellow Toddlers is based on the assumption that parenting behaviours are influenced by the quality of parents' relationship with their own parents.
- Mellow Toddlers aims to improve the parent/child relationship by creating a supportive environment where parents can safely explore their childhood experiences and repair difficult feelings that may interfere with their ability to respond sensitively to their child's needs.
- Parents learn how to sensitively respond to their children's needs.
- Sensitive parenting, in turn, supports children's sense of wellbeing and positive behaviour.

## Intended outcomes

Preventing child maltreatment

## Contact details

**Christine Puckering** Mellow Parenting [christine@mellowparenting.org](mailto:christine@mellowparenting.org)  
<http://www.mellowparenting.org/>

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## About the evidence

Mellow Toddler's most rigorous evidence comes from a QED which was conducted in the UK.

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child and parent outcomes.

A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study, which in this case is the Puckering et al. (1999) and Allely et al. (2014) studies, and so the programme receives a Level 2 rating overall.

Note: This evidence was used as part of a recent systematic review and meta-analysis that considered findings from these two evaluations 1a and 1b, along with findings from evaluations involving other versions of Mellow Parenting programmes (Macbeth et al., 2015).



## Study 1a

**Citation:** Puckering, et al (1999)

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**Design:** QED

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**Country:** United Kingdom

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**Sample:** 69 families

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**Timing:** Post-test; one-year follow-up

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**Child outcomes:**

- Improved child IQ
  - Improved child behaviour
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**Other outcomes:**

- Improved maternal mental state Improved sensitivity
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**Study rating:** 2

Puckering, C., Mills, M., Cox, A. D., Maddox, H., & Evans, J. (1999). *Improving the quality of family support; Mellow Parenting: An intensive intervention*. Final report, Department of Health.

**Available at** <http://www.mellowparenting.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MELLOW-TODDLERS-PAPERThe-impact-of-th>

**Study design and sample**

The first study is a QED.

This study was conducted in the UK, and compared 69 Scottish mothers attending Mellow Toddlers running in four community centres to 29 mothers attending four centres where the programme was not running.

**Measures**

Child emotional and behavioural status were measured using methods derived from Richman's questionnaire (parent report). Child developmental measures (communication, socialisation) were measured using the Vineland Social Maturity Scale (parent report). Child intelligence (performance, verbal) was measured using the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) Full Scale (achievement test).

Maternal mental state was measured using methods developed by Quinton et al. (1976) and Quinton & Rutter (1985) (parent report). Parent-child interaction was measured using observations coded following the Mellow Parenting Coding Scheme (expert observation of behaviour). Parental daily hassles were measured using the Parental Hassle Scale (parent report).

**Findings**

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child and parent outcomes.

Child outcomes include:

- Improved behaviour
- Improved IQ
- Improved parent-child interaction

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to a lack of baseline equivalence between study groups, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

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## Study 1b

**Citation:** Allely et al (2014)

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**Design:** QED

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**Country:** United Kingdom

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**Sample:** 33 families (subset of 69 families in part 1a of the study eligible to be tested)

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**Timing:** -

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**Child outcomes:**

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**Other outcomes:**

- None measured

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Allely, C. S., Puckering, C., Mills, M., Cox, A. D., Evans, J., & Maddox, H. (2014). The impact of the Mellow Parenting Programme on later measures of childhood verbal IQ. *Journal of Educational and Child Psychology, 31*, 28-37.

**Available at** <http://www.mellowparenting.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MELLOW-TODDLERS-PAPERThe-impact-of-th>

## Other studies

The following studies were identified for this programme but did not count towards the programme's overall evidence rating. A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Macbeth, A., Law, J., McGowan, I., Norrie, J., Thompsons, L. & Wilson, P. (2015). Mellow Parenting: systematic review and meta-analysis of an intervention to promote sensitive parenting. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, DOI: 10.1111/dmcn.12864 - **This reference refers to a meta-analysis.**

Puckering, C., Rogers, J., Mills, M., Cox, A. D. Mattsson-Graff, M. (1994). Process and evaluation of a group intervention for mothers with parenting difficulties. *Child Abuse Rev.*, 3, 299–310 - **This reference refers to a pre-post study, conducted in the UK.**

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## Guidebook

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and on detail about programmes shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

The Guidebook serves an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured. As just one of our key resources for commissioners and practitioners, the Guidebook is an essential part of EIF's work to support the development of and investment in effective early intervention programmes.

Our assessment of the evidence for a programme's effectiveness can inform and support certain parts of a commissioning decision, but it is not a substitute for professional judgment. Evidence about what has worked in the past offers no guarantee that an approach will work in all circumstances. Crucially, the Guidebook is not a market comparison website: ratings and other information should not be interpreted as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

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[How to read the Guidebook](#)

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[EIF evidence standards](#)

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[About the EIF Guidebook](#)

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## EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity and a member of the What Works network. We support the use of effective early intervention for children, young people and their families: identifying signals of risk, and responding with effective interventions to improve outcomes, reduce hardship and save the public money in the long term.

We work by generating evidence and knowledge of what works in our field, putting this information in the hands of commissioners, practitioners and policymakers, and supporting the adoption of the evidence in local areas and relevant sectors.

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[www.EIF.org.uk](http://www.EIF.org.uk) | [@TheEIFoundation](https://twitter.com/TheEIFoundation)

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10 Salamanca Place, London SE1 7HB | +44 (0)20 3542 2481

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