

GUIDEBOOK

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Mellow Toddlers

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

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.

Evidence
rating: **2**

Cost rating: **2**

EIF Programme Assessment

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

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.

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.

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.

Key programme characteristics

Who is it for?

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

- Toddlers
-

How is it delivered?

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

- Group
-

Where is it delivered?

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

- Home
 - Children's centre or early-years setting
 - Primary school
 - Community centre
 - Out-patient health setting
-

How is it targeted?

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

- Targeted indicated
-

Where has it been implemented?

United Kingdom

UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

UK evaluation

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

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

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About the evidence

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

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) | **Design:** QED

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 69 families

Child outcomes:

Improved child IQ

Improved child behaviour

Other outcomes:

Improved maternal mental state

Improved sensitivity

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 1b

Citation: Allely et al (2014) | **Design:** QED

Country: United Kingdom

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

Other outcomes:

None measured

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.

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.

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.

[How to read the Guidebook](#)

[EIF evidence standards](#)

[About the EIF Guidebook](#)

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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