



Northern Ireland
Assembly



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



Mellow Parenting: Caring for vulnerable mothers

Mr. Iain W. McGowan

Queens University Belfast

Prof. Phil Wilson

University of Aberdeen

Dr. Lucy Thompson

University of Aberdeen

Maternal Mental Health

- Anxiety disorders are reported in up to 20% of pregnant woman and new mothers (Ford et al 2016).
 - GAD 8%; OCD & Panic Disorders (3%); PTSD (3%)
 - One third to one half of new mothers report traumatic birth (Beck et al 2013)
- Estimated that up to one in five new mothers will meet the diagnostic criteria for mild or moderate depression (Ford et al 2016)
- Suicide is the leading cause of maternal death (McGowan, Sinclair & Owens 2007; CEMACH 2015)
 - Findings reported a suicide rate in perinatal period in 2% of women aged 16–50 years and in 4% among women aged 20–35 years (Khalifeh et al 2016)

Impact on Infant Development

Psychiatric issues

Social development issues

Emotional functioning

Language development

Conduct disorder



Factors influencing maternal emotional health

- In addition to the 'normal' psychological, sociological, economic and biological risk factors found in the general population
 - Anxiety Disorders
 - Hormonal changes, fear,
 - Depressive Illnesses
 - Hormonal changes; intimate partner violence
 - Psychotic Episodes
 - Marital status; caesarian section; history of mental health problems (schizophrenia, bi-polar disorders)
 - Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, unplanned pregnancy and low social support, traumatic delivery; history of mental ill-health (anxiety; depression)

Parenting Programmes

Early support to vulnerable families can be highly effective, and cost-effective. For example, the Incredible Years programme offered to families with high-risk preschool children can substantially reduce the risk of disruptive behaviour (Hutchings et al 2007) and is cost-effective (Bywater et al 2009)

There is however an important gap in the evidence base in terms of postnatal interventions designed for families with children under two years (Barlow et al 2012)



Mellow Parenting

- Underpinned by Attachment, Social Learning and Cognitive Behavioural theories
- Comprises fourteen sessions; one day per week
- Includes lunchtime activities for child and mother
- Includes Homework
- Includes crèche and transport to and from sessions
- Mealtime (or other interaction) video



The effectiveness of Mellow Parenting

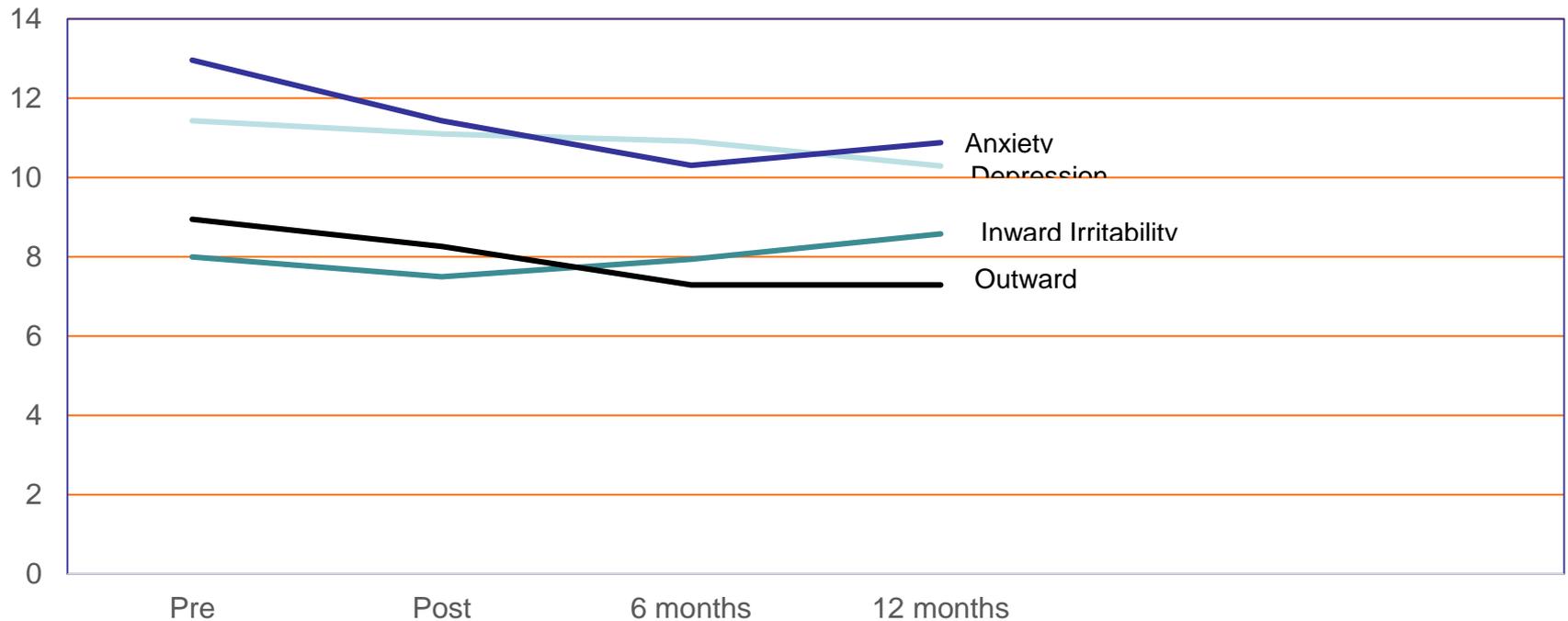
Authors(s)	Location	Sample Size	Findings
Puckering et al (1994/1999)	Scotland	45	Considerable positive change in interaction and child centredness was evident when before and after videotapes of the mothers and children were compared. Negative interaction dropped to one-quarter of the pre-group level and mothers were more effective in exercising appropriate control. Of the 12 children on the Child Protection Register, 10 subsequently had their names removed, with both remaining children returning to the mother's care from compulsory care.
Puckering et al (2011)	Scotland	12	The programme had a positive effect on mothers' mental health, but had no measurable effects on symptoms of RAD or on parent-child interaction, although the variation between families after the group suggested that some had responded more than others.
Borjeson et al (2008)	Russia	16	Data not available

Author	Location	Sample size	Findings
Penehira et al (2011)	New Zealand	39	Māori mothers and grandmothers reported a significant increase in their own well being, their ability to cope with their parenting role/children's behaviours, their feelings of self esteem and adequacy, and confidence in their cultural identity, along with a reduction in unwanted problematic behaviours from their children, and an increase in children's social skills. Qualitative data showed extremely positive responses to the program resources, content, and process. There were a number of requests for a program that fathers could attend.
Puckering et al (2010)	Scotland	10	Maternal mood in mothers attending Mellow Babies improved, with a significant difference in EPDS scores, relative to the control group, at follow-up. Post-intervention, there was a significant difference in levels of positive interactions between groups, favouring mothers attending Mellow Babies. The difference in negative interaction between Mellow Babies and waiting-list control group approached significance, with less negative interaction observed between mothers and infants who attended the group. Participant feedback was highly positive
Morozova et al (2011)	Russia	14	Data not available

(Adapted from MacBeth et al 2015)



Mellow Parenting in N.I. (AWBS) – Southern HSCT



McGowan & McParland 2017



Mellow Parenting in N.I. (WEMWBS) – Southern HSCT



McGowan & McParland 2017



Mellow Parenting in N.I.- South Eastern HSCT

- Using waiting list control design
- Participants in Mellow Babies showed significant improvement in the quality of their interaction with their babies
- Participants in Mellow Babies showed increased outwardly directed-irritability scores
- No significant differences in other scores

King & Thompson 2017, In preparation



What Northern Ireland's Mums said...

Southern HSCT

"I've started planning days out with the children - seeing the excitement in them "Mummy, what are we doing this weekend"

"Take(s) day by day, instead of thinking what is going to happen next"

"I'm not just a mummy"

(McGowan 2017)

SE HSCT

"It created a better bond with my son. At the time I didn't have a bond with him cause I had post-natal depression. But they helped me, all of them. They just made me have fun with my child"

"Really for me it was opening up. It was more about opening up about your past. Things you wouldn't talk about. In daily life you don't talk about private stuff you know. That was nice, to get it all out and not to be judged."

"It is kind of making me a little bit more whole"

(King & Thompson 2017)

Conclusion

- Mellow Parenting is an effective and acceptable intervention to improve the emotional wellbeing of vulnerable mothers
- More robust (prospective) evaluation and research designs are required to fully establish effectiveness