

MELLOW DADS

Outcomes of a relationship-focused group intervention for fathers and their children

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INTRODUCTION

Increasingly the importance of a father's involvement in his child's life is receiving recognition. The positive involvement of fathers is linked to subsequent development of fewer behaviour problems and improved cognitive outcomes for children (Ramchandani *et al*, 2013). A lack of paternal responsiveness is also associated with indicators of poor child outcome, including social and academic impairments (Wilson & Durbin, 2010).

The Mellow Dads programme is delivered over 14 weeks, 1 day per week. Fathers experiencing difficulty in their relationship with their young children are the target group for the programme, which aims to support families with additional health and social care needs. Both the father and their child attend the group, with a joint lunchtime activity and separate morning and afternoon activities. Techniques used include video feedback and life story work. At the core of the programmes are the psychological theories of attachment, social learning and CBT.

METHOD

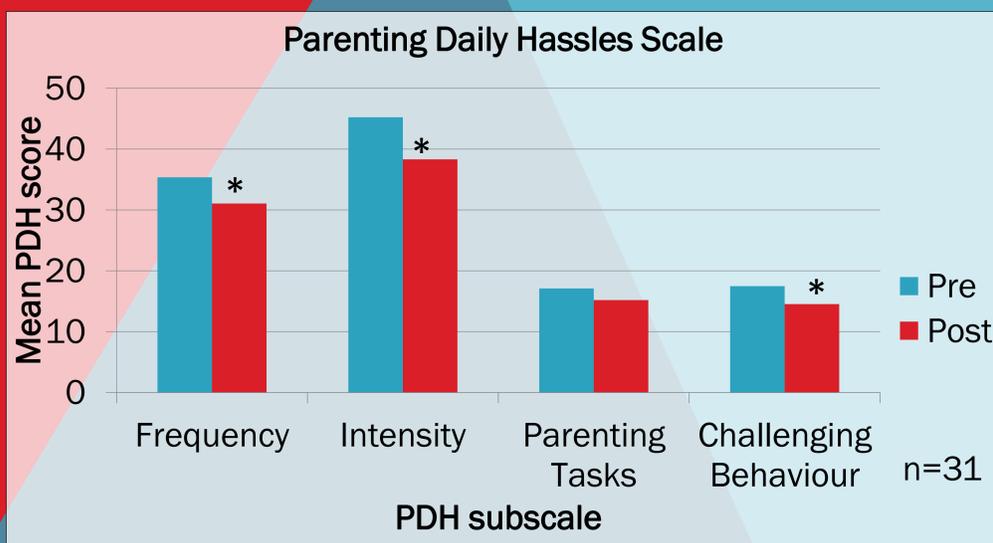
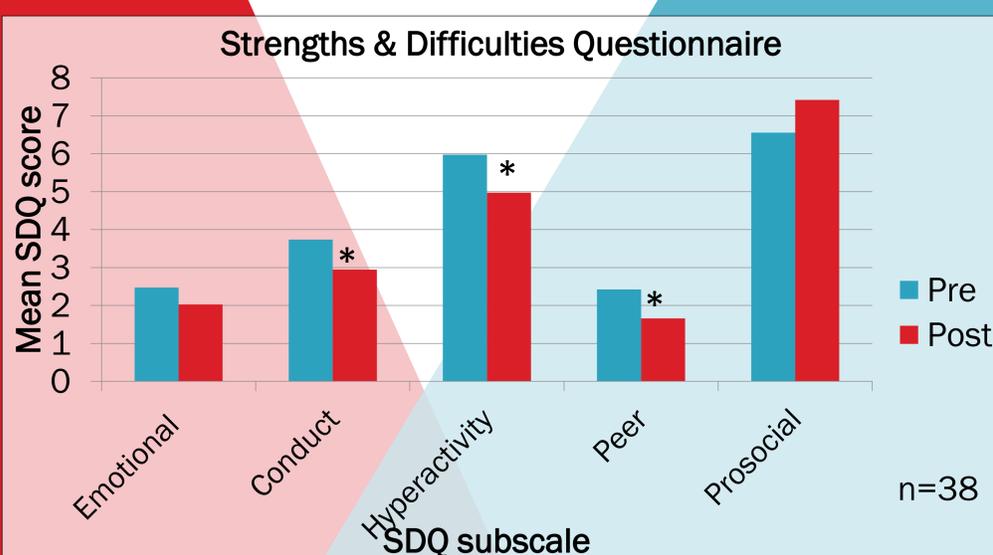
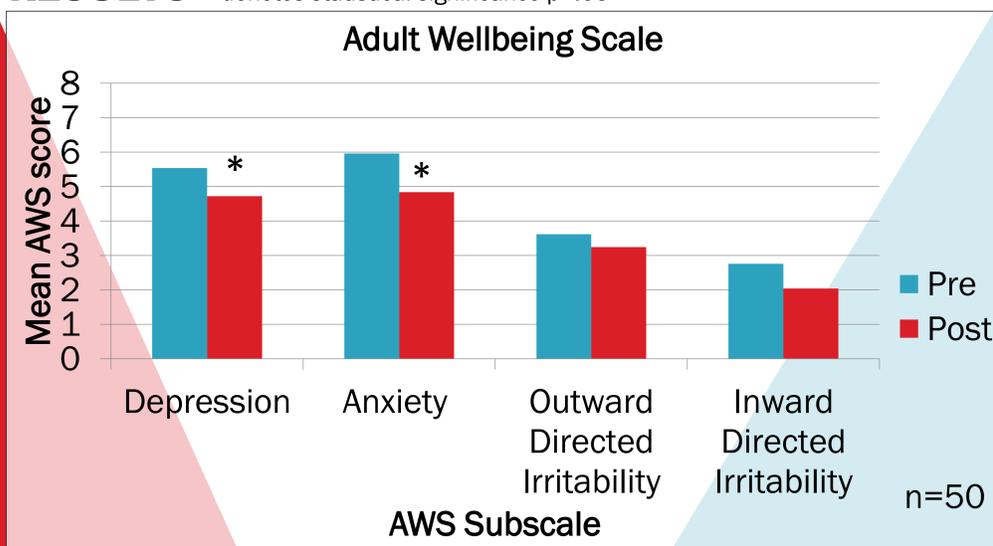
In this cohort study, participants completed measures before and after group participation. Scores were compared using non-parametric tests (Wilcoxon signed rank) to assess any changes, following group participation, on the following scales.

Adult Wellbeing Scale (AWS) (Snaith *et al*, 1978): Assessment of mental wellbeing, broken down into subscales of depression, anxiety, outward-directed irritability and inward-directed irritability.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997): Parental report measure of their child's positive and problem behaviours. The SDQ can be broken down into subscales of emotional behaviours, conduct problems, hyperactive behaviour, peer problems and prosocial behaviours.

Parenting Daily Hassles (PDH) (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990): Considering the frequency and intensity of hassle regarding parenting tasks and challenging child behaviours.

RESULTS * denotes statistical significance $p < .05$

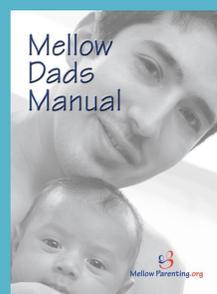


DISCUSSION

The preliminary results from this cohort study indicate that participants in the Mellow Dads programme show significant improvements in their own wellbeing (depression and anxiety) and also report improvements in their child's behaviours (conduct, hyperactivity and peer interactions). Early qualitative data show that fathers appreciate a group which is gender specific, particularly as fathers are often overlooked in traditional children's/parents' services. The relatively low levels of attrition (on average 1 father will not complete from a group of 5) suggest that the Mellow Dads programme is successfully engaging a group that services often fail to engage. Following the Mellow Dads programme, services report increased uptake of further support.

CONCLUSIONS

The preliminary findings of this study are limited due to the small sample size. However at this stage results are promising and suggest that the Mellow Dads programme has positive outcomes for fathers and their children. Further research will add to this sample in order to best capture the outcomes of this programme. Pilots will also be delivered in prison sites across Scotland to assess acceptability, feasibility and outcomes of the programme in a different setting.



- References
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