

# Equal Say Advocacy

Equal Say for Parents

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# Background

- \* Equal Say for Parents have been funded by The Big Lottery since 2009.
- \* We work with parents who have learning disabilities living in Glasgow City
- \* Two main activities-
  - \* Mellow Parenting Programmes
  - \* Independent Advocacy

# Outcomes

- \* Focussed on improving parents' resilience by:-
- \* Supporting parents to address issues which impact on their parenting
- \* Supporting parents to better understand and meet their children's needs
- \* Supporting parents to become better engaged with services and local resources
- \* Evaluation and sharing learning

# Independent Advocacy

- \* Independent Advocacy-free from conflict of interest
- \* Taking direction from the person themselves
- \* 1:1 advocacy usually provided by a paid worker
- \* We also recruit and support volunteers to provide advocacy for some parents
- \* Volunteers mainly involved where there were less formal meetings

# Mellow Parenting Programmes

- \* Mellow is a 14 week group programme based on attachment theory which aims to improve parent-child relationships.
- \* Group builds on parents strengths
- \* There are no compulsory referrals
- \* 7 Mellow Parenting Programmes have been delivered to 29 parents of babies and toddlers

# Mellow Key Components

- \* Personal group
- \* Parenting workshop
- \* Lunch and lunchtime activity
- \* Video feedback
- \* 'Have a Go' activity



# Evaluation May 2016

- \* Carried out by Dr Gillian MacIntyre and Dr Ailsa Stewart
- \* Looked at some case files
- \* Three focus groups with parents
- \* Interviews with project staff
- \* Telephone interviews with referrers

# Evaluation Findings

- \* Where parents or referrers saw a change, they found it hard to say if the change had come about because of the advocacy support or attending the Mellow Parenting Group
- \* Ease of making referrals and flexibility was important to parents and referrers
- \* Independence was important to parents in allowing them to trust advocates and to referrers as they recognised the possibility of conflicts of interest



# What difference did advocacy make?

- \* Parents said:
- \* They found the support of an advocate at child protection meetings invaluable
- \* A good relationship with the advocate was important
- \* They valued having someone on their side
- \* Advocates took the time to explain things to them and this was important
- \* Parents felt their relationships with other professionals improved

# What difference did advocacy make?

- \* Referrers said:
- \* Presence of advocacy increased the level of respect and attention given to parents
- \* Advocacy support meant parents were more likely to engage with child protection processes
- \* Advocacy support meant parents were more open to developing positive relationships with other workers
- \* Advocates were able to challenge inappropriate services or support because they are independent

# What did Parents say about the Mellow Groups?

- \* Support to attend the group was important
- \* Preparation before coming to the group made a difference
- \* They liked the way the group was structured
- \* They especially enjoyed the lunchtime activities
- \* They valued the support with 'Have a Go' activities at home

# What did Parents say about the Mellow Groups?

- \* Almost all parents valued the social side of the group
- \* Many said they had kept in touch with other parents since attending the group
- \* Parents thought it was helpful to attend a group with other parents with learning disabilities.
- \* They felt more comfortable because of shared experiences and not feeling judged
- \* Parents felt more confident because they gave each other advice based on their own experiences

# Outcomes

- \* All parents said they felt more confident generally and in relation to parenting specifically
- \* Most had learned new ways of parenting and applied them at home
- \* Almost all parents felt they had better relationships with their child
- \* Most felt more confident about joining other groups and asking for help when they need it

*“The thing I found is we’re all parents in here and we’re all sort of in the same situation. We can all relate to one another with our problems and that leads to other advice.”*

*“Well, J she’s been staying up most of the time but with coming to the group...I give her a bottle or a cup of milk and she falls asleep round about half seven. That has changed in the past couple of weeks since we’ve been learning.”*

*“It’s been a good experience meeting new people; it’s been a good laugh, good fun.”*

# What Have we Learned?

- \* High level of engagement needs good preparatory work
- \* Removing or reducing the barriers to attendance is vital
- \* Advocacy running alongside the parenting programme has been a good fit
- \* Role of the volunteer in transferring learning to the home environment is key
- \* Repetition can be helpful and shouldn't be seen as failure

# Conclusion

There is a clear and continued need for the project

The knowledge and skills developed by the project are seen as important

There is clear evidence of the benefits of this expertise to external organisations

A particular strength of the project has been the person centred approach

Mellow parenting programme was highly valued by parents and referrers and was viewed as being effective in meeting the needs of parents with learning disabilities.



# Some Good News!

We have secured funding from the Big Lottery to develop the project further over the next three years.

We will work in partnership with Stepping Stones for Families to deliver the Mellow Futures Programme to parents with learning difficulties in Glasgow.

We will continue to provide one to one advocacy support with an increased focus on supporting parents to develop their self-advocacy skills.



# Contact

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