



## "Welcome to Edition 2.

In our first edition we said that we would have a focus on the different programmes in our forthcoming newsletters. In this issue we are focusing on Getting Through The Day and Positive Steps"

### GETTING THROUGH THE DAY

Getting Through The Day aims to:

- Improve relationships between parents and their children.
- Help parents understand how children grow and why they behave the way they do.
- To build confidence in the parents.
- To develop an "internal toolkit" that parents feel confident in using to deal better with situations with their children.

The course was developed with a group of parents in 1994, so it is "by parents, for parents". Parents usually find they are not the only ones experiencing difficulties with their children, and the support parents get from other parents is a vital component of the course. The course lasts 10 weeks, each weekly session is 2 hours duration.

Getting Through The Day was originally developed for parents with children under 5, but there are now several versions. These include a course for parents with Primary School children, and a course for parents of Teenagers (A Survival Course For Parents Of Teenagers). We have run a version for parents with children with additional needs, and another for parents with children with ADHD.

There is a follow up course called Getting Through The Day 2, which looks at ways parents can look at life more positively, and feel better about themselves.

The courses run for all parents, fathers and mothers, and some grandparents. Sometimes there is a mixture, and sometimes the courses have been offered for either mothers, or fathers.

The course has been researched to see if it works, and the results showed it worked for parents. In particular, parents felt more

confident in themselves, and they also felt more confident in trying the ideas in the course, and making them work.

We have evaluated the course.

For 10 of these courses:

Self-esteem was raised on average 37%, while behaviour improved—how frequent, by 29%, and how intense, by 48%

Here are some things the parents have said about the course:

- "I'm using a different tone in voice. Explaining things properly instead of rushing around. Listening more instead of half-listening".
- "You have to change, not the child. You have to change your behaviour, not the child's".
- "I didn't expect the course to be such a support for all kinds of parents. Highly recommended".
- "I was such an angry mum before (doing Getting Through The Day), now I am calmer and it has changed the way I live my life".
- "It helps you realise that you are not the only one and the support you can get from the others in the group. The tips you get help you understand your child".
- "Me and the kids are good, now there is more love in the family".
- "I can talk to my son and he can come and speak to me without getting in an argument because I had the help and advice from the workers and the people who went to the group".
- "It's fantastic! Helped my confidence, made me realise I am important too and it's OK to say, "No"! Every parent needs to know".
- "What a difference it has made to me. I have more confidence and I stick up for myself more".

## POSITIVE STEPS

The birth of a child is supposed to be one of the happiest times in a couple's life.

Sadly for 1 in 10 women this is not the case and many women, as a result, are feeling that they are a "bad mother" who may feel extremely overwhelmed by her change in circumstances. Many women therefore struggle to seek help and support for fear of being judged and criticised.

With this knowledge Sure Start in conjunction initially with the Peri-natal Mental Health Unit, and latterly with both Livingston and Whitdale Family Centres, devised a programme called Positive Steps.

Positive Steps is a 12 week programme which looks at the many symptoms of Postnatal illness such as anxiety, feelings of disappointment and guilt, conflicting thoughts and feelings and loss of confidence (although not exclusively). Each session runs for 2 hours and during this time the babies are cared for within the children's group which is run with the Nursery Officers from either Whitdale or Livingston FC and supported by Play Support Workers.

Within the 12 weeks is 4 "Baby & Me" sessions. These sessions provide mums with the opportunity to participate in a pleasurable experience with their baby (such as massage, water play) without feeling judged and allow them the space to enjoy their baby again.

The groups are run within local early years centres and in the main health professionals will refer women into the group, although self-referrals and referrals from other agencies are also accepted.

All participants are asked to complete Irritability, Depression, Anxiety (IDA) scale as developed by Snaith *etal* (1978) (also more commonly known as the Adult Well-being Scale) at the point of initial contact with the family and then again at the time of the post group evaluation interview. This scale looks at all four areas of well-being including Depression; Anxiety; Outward Irritability and Inward Irritability.

In most cases women show a reduction in all four areas of well-being with most reduction being in relation to anxiety. Through running Positive Steps group most women will speak of feelings of low mood however it is their high levels of anxiety that appear to be most

debilitating to them. This reduction in respect of anxiety appears to allow women to feel more in control of their other feelings & emotions thus allowing them to feel more in control of the situation.

No women have reported that their feelings in relation to all four areas of well-being have increased following completion of Positive Steps.

All participants are followed up at 6 months following completion of the group with their views sought in respect to how they are feeling now. At this time the women who complete the evaluation and return it report that there anxiety continues to lessen.

If you would like more information and data relating to Positive Steps please contact Karen Love at Sure Start.

Here is what some of the mothers said about their experience in the group:

"(I benefited) from the chance to talk about my feelings with others in a similar position"

"(most beneficial) as assertiveness session learned more about self. Shocked by how low self-esteem was."

"I am not as anxious or scared of my baby "

"My low mood and anxiety have improved greatly. Its good to know I'm not alone and other people feel the same way I do".

"I enjoyed the Baby & Me sessions a lot. They have given me lots of ideas of things to do with my daughter."

"The groups is perfect and I can't think of anything that would improve it"

"I still have low days but can recognise and deal with them better now"

"I feel I can notice my mood and anxiety and understand what causes me to feel a certain way and I can control it better"

### **Positive Steps Award**

Senior social worker, Karen Love (from the Sure Start team) was awarded the accolade of UK social worker of the year award by Unison for the development of Positive Steps which is an innovative and successful programme developed by Karen in conjunction with colleagues at the Mother and Baby Unit at St. Johns Hospital

For more information check out the Parenting West Lothian website

[www.parentingwestlothian.org.uk](http://www.parentingwestlothian.org.uk)