

A summary report of the 'Believe' programme at Motherwell

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Executive summary

An evaluation by took place of the Motherwell 'Believe' programme. *This is a relationship-based programme for mothers or pregnant women whose child/children may be subject to a child protection plan or whose child/children have been recently placed on a child protection plan*¹ The evaluation was conducted by Dr Mandy Urquhart and Dr Lisa Oakley from the School of Psychology at the University of Chester. It consisted of a mixed-methods approach employing a survey measuring quality of life, self-esteem, self-efficacy, anxiety, and mood, along with interviews at three points in the programme. Ten individuals on the Believe programme took part in the research study. Findings demonstrated overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, with positive outcomes including increased self-confidence, signposting to other services, providing individualised support and encouragement, feeling accepted, positive impact of volunteer work opportunities and positive impacts on behaviours and mental health. The role of the project coordinator was seen to be central to the success of the programme. Final recommendations include raising awareness and understanding of Believe, considering how to draw the programme to a close and reflections on referral information and processes.

¹ <https://believe-motherwell.co.uk/>

Methodology

Design

The evaluation employed a longitudinal, mixed-method approach over 3 staged time points. For the quantitative data, a questionnaire was used which incorporated questions regarding quality of life, self-esteem, self-efficacy, anxiety and mood. For the qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This allowed the researchers to measure if there had been any changes to psychological wellbeing and to understand the experience of taking part in the programme from the participants' perspective. The evaluation began prior to the Covid-19 pandemic but sadly had to be paused due to lock down restrictions. The evaluation recommenced thereafter and ran from May 2021 to August 2022.

During the time of the evaluation 17 women took part in the Believe programme, 10 of whom chose to take part in the evaluation. The evaluation was introduced to those taking part in the programme during the first meeting by the project coordinator but it was made clear that participation was voluntary and the decision not to participate would have no impact on the ability to take part in the Believe programme.

If those on the Believe programme chose to take part in the evaluation an initial meeting with one of the researchers was made. The scale was administered and interviews took place at each meeting at the following time points; 1-2 weeks after starting the programme, 6 weeks after and 6 months after. This enabled researchers to gather information about initial reflections and progress through the programme.

10 participants took part in the first stage of the evaluation, 9 at stage 2 and 8 at stage 3. The mean age of participants was 28.3 years.

Ethics

The evaluation gained ethical approval from the School of Psychology ethics committee at the University of Chester. Ethical issues were carefully considered and addressed in the application, including informed consent.

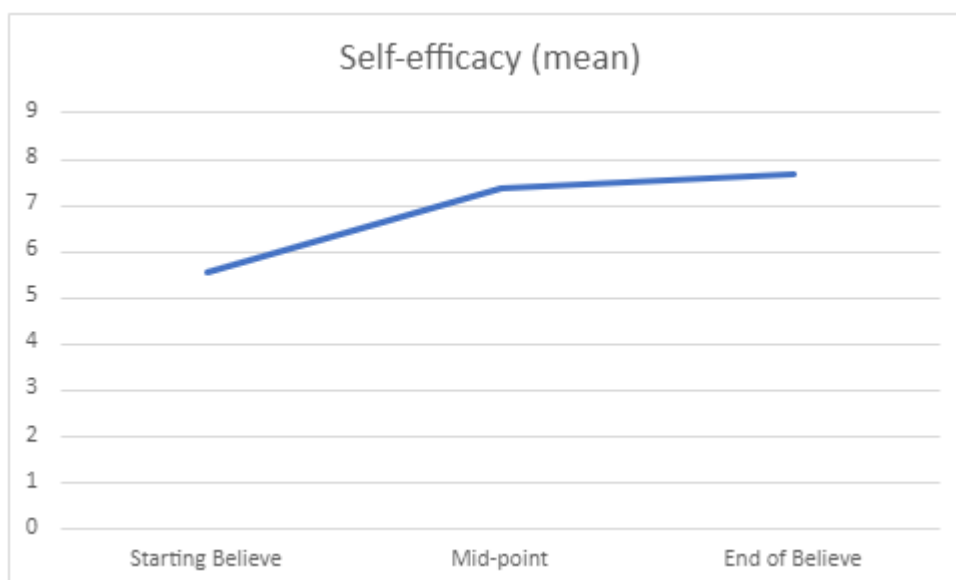
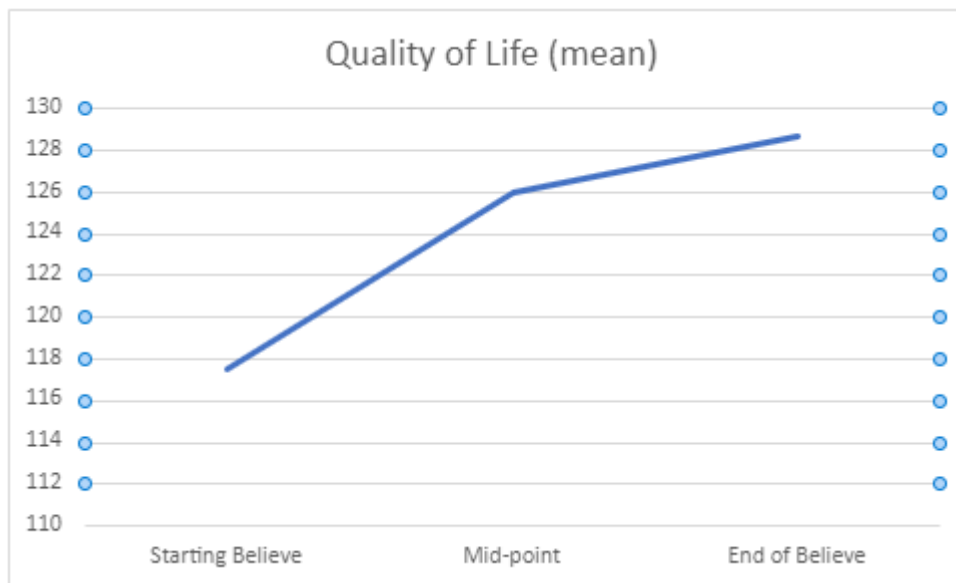
Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2020). Analysis of quantitative data was restricted due to the low sample size (a large sample size is necessary in order to explore if findings are statistically significant) therefore caution is needed when interpreting these findings. Still, the descriptive statistics show some interesting trends.

Findings

Quantitative findings

Means and standard deviations for measures of anxiety, self-esteem, and mood showed no meaningful affect, however measures on Quality of Life and Self-Efficacy showed that a gradual increase over time.



Qualitative findings

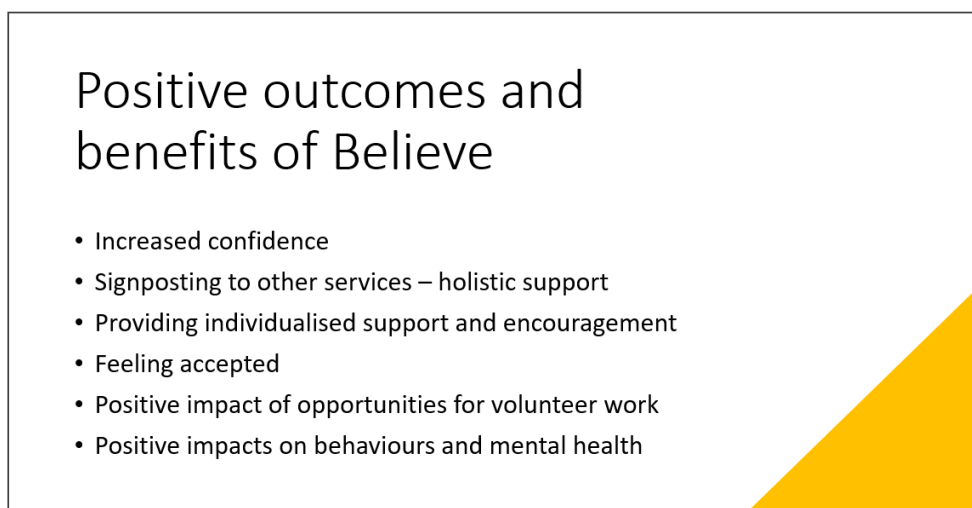
Positive impact of Believe.

The interviews demonstrated the positive impact taking part in Believe and importantly the relationship with the project coordinator had on those on the programme and some discussed how they felt more positive about the future.

(Quotes included throughout this section are in italics and taken from the participant interviews)

- *I don't think I'd have done it without them really*
- *If they didn't have Believe and Motherwell, I don't think there is anything out there which is there for mums in situations like this.*
- *I'm feeling very optimistic, looking forward to the future*
- *I've come such a long way and I'm just really grateful to them.*
- *When I had nothing and I was rock bottom and I had nowhere to turn, they were there for me.*

There were several key themes which emerged in terms of positive outcomes and benefits of Believe. These are summarised in the slide below and then explained in this section of the report.



Positive outcomes and benefits of Believe

- Increased confidence
- Signposting to other services – holistic support
- Providing individualised support and encouragement
- Feeling accepted
- Positive impact of opportunities for volunteer work
- Positive impacts on behaviours and mental health

Increased confidence

It is clear that taking part in believe has an impact on self-confidence. It was notable that the way in which participants talked about themselves and their situations changed as Believe progressed, as can be demonstrated in the quotes below

- *Because I felt... I felt lost and quite worthless. I've been quite drained coming out of this abusive relationship ... and it's given me that belief in myself, that I am strong ... and it's just building my confidence back up, to be that strong, independent woman that I was.*
- *I think the main thing it's helped with is my confidence...*
- *I have enrolled onto an Open University course, it's an access course so it starts in May*
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Signposting to other services – holistic support

There was a clear acknowledgement in the interviews that an aspect of believe that was helpful was signposting to other services, therefore enabling an individual to obtain holistic support.

- *I had a lot of debt, but she signposted me to different agencies*
- *(Project coordinator) referred me for private counselling*
- *She gave me a whole barrage of these other things that were fantastic that could be helpful such as helping towards things that you might need for the children, debt relief help, there was all sorts of different bits that I could pick out and pull from if I needed to.*
- *if she doesn't know, she's good at signposting.*

Providing individualised support and encouragement

A repeated message in the interviews was the level of individualised support and encouragement those taking part in believe received. This seemed to have impacts on self-confidence and self-efficacy.

- *Just from, like, the one visit I had with her, I left feeling so much more positive that, like, somebody was actually in my corner, instead of being against me, or judging me*
- *She's just really supported me and lifted me with my mental health.*
- *she unfogged me a little bit, so I could fix myself*
- *She's always there if you need support*
- *she's supportive with the meetings that we're having with social services, so she's part of them as well and she... it's nice to have somebody that's separate to them, that can tell them, that okay she's only there really for me*

Feeling accepted

It was clear that those who took part in the evaluation felt accepted and that this was very important to them. One participant contrasted this with judgement she perceived from others.

- *she's [Project coordinator] not judgemental at all.*
- *When you're being judged by so many other people, that's the one thing that, you know, they're not going to judge you.*

- *it's just that reality that it doesn't matter how much we tell ourselves people are kind and loving, people will judge*

Positive impact of opportunities for volunteer work

There were a number of mentions of the opportunity to take part in volunteer work. The personal positive impact of these opportunities was in terms of self-esteem and self-confidence. It also provided the opportunity to make social connections. This was important as in the first interviews some participants noted feeling isolated.

- *I don't think I'm normal to people my age and my friends around me.*
- *I've not got many friends*

In discussing the positive impact of volunteering opportunities, some noted the ability to make connections and also to have the chance to 'give back', it seemed important that those on the programme were able to contribute in addition to receiving services from believe.

- *I've got into the volunteering with Motherwell through that as well, so I'm getting out more and seeing people. I have a bit of a social life now.*
- *I'm going to be doing some voluntary work at the baby bank... part of me likes it that little bit more because I know that I've needed that help, like, I've had help from places like that before, so I know that I've needed it and it's just nice to be able to give something back.*
- *I want to do volunteer work for Motherwell, to give something back and to help other women that have been in similar situations to myself.*

Impact on behaviour and mental health

There was evidence in the interviews that taking part in Believe together with using other services had a positive impact on behaviours and mental health. One example is a participant who at the final interview had felt supported to stop drinking and smoking

- *122 [alcohol free] days now. And I stopped smoking 36 days ago*

Other participants discussed the impact of Believe on their mental health and this was linked to support from the project coordinator and their knowledge of mental health

- *I know that I have improved with my mental health, a hundred percent*
- *...she's just really supported me and lifted me with my mental health.*
- *She has a lot of knowledge with the mental health aspect of it*

Summary

The feedback in the interviews was overwhelmingly positive about the impact of taking part in the programme and the role of the project coordinator in the success of the programme. This will be explored further in the next section.

The importance of the role of the Believe coordinator

One of the main findings of the evaluation was that the influence and importance of the project coordinator. They were discussed positively and repeatedly in interviews. From early

interviews it was clear how challenging the experience of being subject to a child protection plan can be.

- *Spotlight is really on you when your children are on a CP plan.*
- *... it was really hard to be scrutinised from the inside out.*
- *I used to have to turn my camera off in the zoom calls because I was crying. It just was really really hard, and I felt like I was facing them alone, you know, it was me against the world and it was awful ... I dreaded every phone call*

In this context the relationship built with the project coordinator was seen as especially significant.

- *Just from, like, the one visit I had with her, I left feeling so much more positive that, like, somebody was actually in my corner, instead of being against me, or judging me*
- *You're under the spotlight and you've got all these different professionals looking at your life in detail and making judgments on you. But (Believe project co-ordinator) isn't like that, she doesn't make judgement. She's there basically to support me. As the Mother, the Mum, the women, she's there for me really. Like obviously Social Services are there for the children but no one is there for the parent, and you suffer, you do suffer. You think you're a failure as a parent but (Believe project worker) makes you see it in a different way."*
- *She (Believe project worker) has definitely help me to re-find myself because at my first session I'd lost myself with everything that had gone on with social services, events, mental health. To not know who you are, but she's helped me re-gain it, definitely."*
- *"She's been great, she's amazing ... she's always there for me".*

The evaluation suggests the individual who holds the position of project coordinator is key to the success of the programme and therefore careful thought must be given to recruitment to ensure the continuing success of the programme if it is to be run in more locations or by different individuals.

Use of the flower

Reflections in the interview showed that the flower used as part of the Believe programme can help those taking part to see their progress.

- *We still do the flower at the end of every session. We just did one today so, I think the progress of the flower from the first session to today's session it was like ones and two and now it's nines and tens*
- *The flower is very good because it's good to, because obviously (Project coordinator) knows from week to week what the score was, so she can see, like she'll say how you've come on, so how your scores have improved*

The flower also helped with reflection

- *It's changed but it fluctuates which actually is a really interesting outlook on life, because we all have this it's only up from here attitude and it's not. It's really not and it's a huge indicator of I can be amazing one week, everything's gone swimmingly, I*

could be so happy ... could be really rubbish the next because something's gone wrong or I didn't get a job or whatever.

- *I can see each week the reasons why I might not be doing so well.*

One participant suggested that the flower may not need to be used in each session. Therefore, some reflection on how individuals interact with the flower could be helpful.

- *I think it's useful, but I think it's like ... I think it's used too often. I don't think there's enough of a gap between using the flower for it to ... I mean obviously if you put the first one and the last one together, you'll see a bigger difference, but I do think the ones in the middle, like, I don't think you'd see much from them say like from session one to session three, I don't think you'd see much from them. But the first one and the last one or looking gradually through, I do think you'd notice a difference*

Overall, use of the flower was seen as a positive part of Believe, allowing reflection and mapping of progress.

The impact of ending Believe/length of the programme

Some of the participants reflected that finishing the believe programme was a little daunting or that they wished the programme could be longer.

- *... I'm a little bit sad that I'm not going to be getting that support*
- *it's going to be a little bit daunting now that all the services are drawing away.*
- *I just think it should be longer, but I know they have to deal with other people that are coming in. I, personally, for me, would like for it to go on a bit more.*
- *I feel like possibly maybe the potential to have a longer time with somebody. I know that time is a bit short and sometimes the after effects of peoples' situations are going to be felt for much longer, so potentially just a longer experience with somebody*

It is recognised that the Believe programme is quite long in comparison to many such initiatives. However, the findings suggest perhaps a little more thought could be given to how to end the programme and transition to alternative sources of support where required.

Improving referrals and referral information

In the first interviews participants commented on the information provided ahead of starting Believe. There were suggestions that more detailed information could be helpful when being referred.

- *.. it didn't explain what it was, they just attached a leaflet which I found quite bizarre because I didn't know what Motherwell was, I'd never even heard of them*
- *I didn't know anything about them*
- *I would have liked it if she'd have maybe had some more information beforehand*

Raising awareness

Those who took part were very positive about the impact of Believe and suggested it was important that awareness of the project was raised so that others who could be supported were facilitated to know about and be able to access the service.

- *I think more women should be aware of Motherwell and the Believe programme. I think it could really benefit a lot of women.*
- *I think they should be advertised a bit more.*
- *I just think it does need to be wider publicised. I don't think enough women know about it. It's just such a great support network.*
- *I feel that maybe more people who are going through similar situations, because not all women are offered the Believe project, but I think it'd be really beneficial for other women to have access to that support."*
- *"What they do with what they have is amazing. I didn't even know it existed before I got referred to it. I think people should know because they could do so much for women."*
- *I think every town, city, should have a Motherwell*

Recommendations and Reflections

Overall the feedback on Believe was positive, there was no negative feedback and a very few suggestions for improvement from participants. The following recommendations arise from the findings and could improve the quality of the experience of Believe even further.

- Reflect on the use of flower and whether this can be more individualised
- Consider how to draw Believe to a close, perhaps including positive affirmations to keep and a transition to other support services
- Reflect on referral information and processes
- Recognise the pivotal role of the project coordinator in the success of the programme, ensure robust recruitment processes are in place