

INTRODUCTION

Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT) is a structured programme for children living with parental substance misuse (alcohol or drugs). When first developed in 2006 it was an innovative step forward in meeting the needs of these children, within the context of the family.

M-PACT is a whole family approach, which supports families to understand how parental substance misuse has disrupted their lives. M-PACT brings together several families, where at least one parent has an alcohol or drug problem and where there is at least one child aged 8-17 years old.

Following a comprehensive family assessment, the programme runs for eight consecutive weeks, combining separate group work with children and adults, work with family units and whole group work with all participants. Each family has a review session shortly after the programme ends, a reunion session approximately three months later, brings the families together for the final time.

Each M-PACT programme is delivered by a team of four facilitators, sometimes supported by additional workers such as volunteers.

Today, the M-PACT (UK) Project is supporting the delivery of M-PACT in a range of locations.

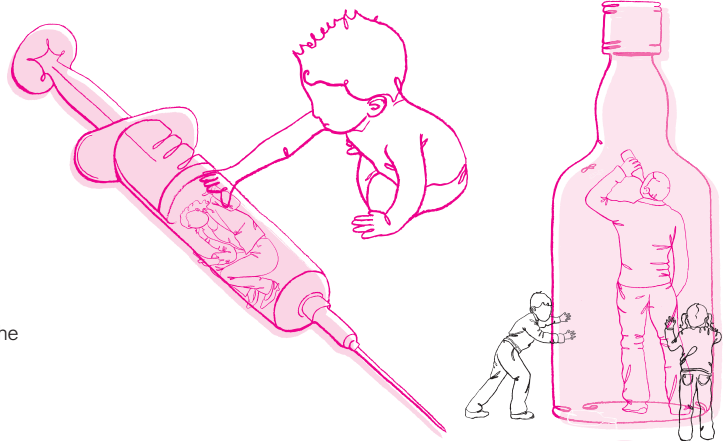
Local services deliver M-PACT under a licence agreement purchased from Action on Addiction. Delivery is supported by a University of Bath accredited training programme and a comprehensive practitioner manual.

This poster presents qualitative data from families who attended 13 M-PACT programmes, which ran between 2006 and mid 2011 and which were independently evaluated.

Qualitative data were collected shortly after the end of a programme via interviews or focus groups with 73 programme participants (37 children and 36 adults) and a drawing exercise completed by 12 children.

64 M-PACT FAMILIES

- 82 children (43 girls, 39 boys) aged 6-18 years.
- 75 adults; 56 were female.
- Adults were primarily the substance misuser (usually mothers).
- 12 adult 'affected others' (usually another parent).
- Alcohol was the primary problem, or one of the substances being misused, in over half of families.
- In 44 families all participants were defined as White British, while in the other 20 families at least one person was from another BME group.
- Approximately 80% of those who started a programme completed a minimum of 6 M-PACT sessions; 71 individuals (37 children and 34 adults) attended all 8 M-PACT programme sessions.



KEY FINDINGS

Engaging with M-PACT

- It was important to many families that M-PACT directly involved children, in terms of receiving help this was something that few of them had experienced before.

Healthier and more united families

- M-PACT provided a valuable opportunity for families to spend time together; some participants said that M-PACT gave them more confidence as a family.
- Families also reported that they were trying to spend more time together as a family, and M-PACT seemed to strengthen bonds between children and their parents.

Shared experiences

- The majority of participants valued greatly the opportunity that M-PACT provided to listen and talk to other families who had similar problems. For many, it normalised their experiences and made them feel less alone.
- Many of the young people made friends and enjoyed meeting other young people who were 'like them'. For many, it was the first time that they had met other young people who lived with similar problems and had the opportunity to share their experiences with them.

Understanding addiction

- Participants said that they learned a lot about addiction and how it can affect families. An important outcome for some of the young people was to realise that the problems at home were not their fault.

Changes in communication

- A key area where there was change for many families was communication. Participants said that they were more open and honest with each other, parents said that they listened to their children more, and many families said that there had been a reduction in arguments and conflict.

Ending M-PACT

- Participants expressed how much they enjoyed the eight weeks and how they wished it was longer, commenting on how they needed ongoing support and access to services.

Young people really enjoyed the mixture of learning and fun at the M-PACT sessions.

There were other changes for children, including increased confidence and self-esteem, getting on better at school and making friends.

WHAT FAMILIES SAID

'...I think it's given us more confidence in ourselves as a family' **(adult)**

'I liked it from the first session. I felt comfortable, I was excited about it, I wanted to see what would happen..... I looked forward to the sessions all week, it was the highlight of my week' **(child)**

'I liked it because I made some new friends who have the same problems as me' **(child)**

'It was good to....tell someone about my feelings because I never get to tell anyone about my feelings' **(child)**

'Every now and then I reflect on it and think that's why that's happening, that's why that's happening, now I know why' **(child)**

'....The M-PACT programme has helped me to get closer to my [child] and explain to [them] more about my addiction' **(adult)**

'M-PACT made me realise the effect it's had on the children' **(adult)**

'I can't really change [my parent], I have to learn to live with that....getting on with my life and not letting [my parent] problems affect me....I don't want it to get me down, I've got a sense that I can get on with my life without letting it worry me' **(child)**

'Mum doesn't shout or smack us or hurt us any more...she is less angry and aggressive, there is no more hitting and shouting...we're all happy' **(child)**

'Instead of arguing and shouting...we talk [things] over, we try not to argue and keep our voices calm' **(child)**

'I think it helped a lot because I ain't getting bullied no more, I go out a lot....it feels good.... I used to hate going to school, I used to hate going in there cos people used to call me names and that...but no-one does that no more' **(child)**

'...I know my brother and my mum a bit more better than I used to....it brought us closer together so we can bond with each other a bit more, cos normally I'm out just playing with my mates and [my brother's] out with his mates and mum's in her room, now mum comes out of her room we all sit down downstairs, watch TV, eat dinner together, which we never used to do before' **(child)**

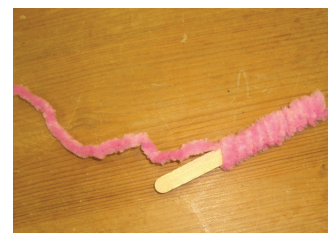
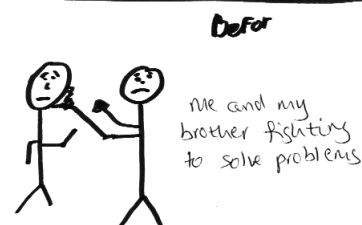
'I miss it so much on a Thursday....all of us wanted it to go on, 8 weeks is not long enough....we all really looked forward to it....all I know is I didn't want it to end, and I was the first one to cry' **(adult)**



LEARNING & NEXT STEPS



- Engagement has been high, suggesting that families value the help which is available to them.
- The vast majority of participants wished that M-PACT were longer, or that they could continue to receive the support which M-PACT gave them. Consideration needs to be given as to how M-PACT can help families further in the long-term.
- The qualitative findings suggest that M-PACT facilitates changes which are in line with the aims of the programme.
- It is possible that M-PACT influences the protective factors and processes believed to support resilience in children who are affected by parental substance misuse.
- There are many more services for families affected by substance misuse now than when M-PACT was developed, but a programme which brings family units together is rare and more the exception than the norm. M-PACT is therefore filling a much needed gap and is making an important contribution to supporting families.
- The research to date has identified a number of areas of learning which are informing the continued development of the programme.
- M-PACT continues to be rolled out across the UK in a variety of regions and localities, embedding it within local service delivery.



Addiction can look pink and fluffy but when you unravel it, it's like a hard stick

This poster was prepared by Lorna Templeton (Independent Research Consultant) and Emma Cox (M-PACT UK Project Manager at Action on Addiction) for the Society for the Study of Addiction Annual Symposium in York, 10-11 November 2011.

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For more information on **M-PACT** and/or the research briefing please contact:

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