

Inquiry into teenage pregnancy

One Parent Families Scotland

Introduction

The **Transforming Lives** Young Lone Parents Project in Lanarkshire was developed to provide a holistic and supportive programme designed to assist vulnerable young lone mothers to provide a better life for themselves and their children. As the Westminster Government's Welfare Reform programme has increased the requirements on lone parents to prepare for and look for work when their youngest child is 5 years OPFS Lanarkshire have recognised the need to develop a tailored personal and social development programme that provides intensive support and address additional barriers & provide young lone parents with the core employability skills.

Transforming Lives' Aims

To develop a holistic and supportive programme designed to assist and encourage young lone parents to achieve their potential & therefore provide a better life for themselves and their children.

Transforming Lives' Key Objectives

- Establish, market and deliver training programmes for young lone parents aged 16-18 years.
- Develop a holistic programme that will increase confidence and self-esteem, improve budgeting/money management, develop life skills and address health inequalities.
- Increase the opportunities available to young lone parents by developing their employability skills.
- Develop a peer mentoring programme that will provide additional support for young mothers & facilitate their participation in shaping the project.

The Transforming Lives Project over the last year has enabled 59 young lone parents to prepare for the future and get access to the advice, information & support to access the following:

- Support to **return to training, education & employment** through activities specifically designed to give valuable advice and support on all aspects of returning to work, building confidence or entering training and education.
- **Family Finances** – benefits advice, debt advice and financial planning for lone parents through group work and one-to-one sessions.
- **Family support** – to encourage and enable young parents to make the most of the opportunities available to them so they can flourish as healthy, happy and achieving families.

“Transforming Lives” Programme Outline.

The programme has been developed to take a learner centred approach and has been designed to allow young lone parents the opportunity to choose the focus and content of many areas of the programme. All programmes were delivered in partnership with a range of local organisations including: The programmes delivered have included the following: YMCA; NHS Young Parents Groups; Jobcentre Plus; Routes to Work Ltd; NHS Public Health Nurses; Community Learning and Development; North Lanarkshire Early Years and Childcare: Burnbank Family Centre; Social Work; Cornerstone House; William Grant Trust; Community Police: SAMH, Housing: Motherwell & Cumbernauld College

The programmes delivered have included the following:

- Sexual health, relationships, healthy eating on a budget, stress management, drug/alcohol awareness, personal presentation.
- Introduction to child development and parenting skills.
- Money management and budgeting, welfare benefits, back to work calculations etc.
- Preparing for the Future - recognition of prior skills, preparing for the world of work. Information on training, education and employability options.
- Access to additional local services
- Organisation of team work activity

The programme is flexible to adapt to the needs of the young client group and to address additional barriers as they arise.

Young Parents Baseline and Review Assessment

The Access Co-ordinator and Young Lone Parent Mentors support young parents with a wide and varied range of issues. Referrals from a range of organisations are including: Health, Jobcentre Plus, Social Work and Young Parents Groups.

Initial meetings are arranged to allow young parents to meet with project staff and to begin to develop a positive working relationship.

Confidentiality and the nature of support offered is discussed and young parents have the opportunity to highlight and fears or concerns that they may have regarding taking part in the Transforming Lives programme.

During further one to one support a baseline assessment is completed. The assessment process used is based on the Rickter Scale model, offering a sliding scale, where young parents can place where they are now in their lives and where they would like to be. This opens up discussion on how they think they could achieve their goals and what support they feel they require.

The questions relate to all areas of their lives such as finances, isolation, childcare, parenting and training, education and employment.

This approach has allowed young parents to focus on positive aspects of their lives, as well as, highlighting issues which they are often unaware of.

Key Characteristics

The key characteristics of the Transforming Lives delivery model are:

- Services are located, developed and delivered by experience staff
- Financial capability & income maximisation is embedded into all programmes.
- Developing and training lone parents as mentors capable of engaging with and delivering a tailored, holistic service to other parents.
- The provision of a holistic service that enables parents to address the debt, income issues, health, housing, and multiple barriers they face.
- Offering a single, ongoing and flexible point of support with a mentor who has experienced similar challenges.
- Support with dealing with relationships - boundaries/power imbalances
- Offering support over an extended period of time if necessary.
- Offering both one-to-one and group-based training activities, designed to support progression along the Young Parents Progression Pathway.
- Signposting to and linking lone parents into a wide range of other services and agencies critical to their overall progression into training, education, volunteering and employment.

The service is delivered by a Lone Parent Access Coordinators alongside 2 Lone Parent Mentors a Money Advice Worker and Welfare Rights Advisor & is backed up by a Scottish Government funded Lone Parent Advice Service which employs three Right Workers who are all lone parents.

What Distinguishes the Transforming Lives Model?

Whilst mentoring is not a fully proven intervention, research has shown that an individual's relationship with a 'significant other' can increase resistance to stress, confer a level of protection and promote a degree of resilience. Interest in it derives from evidence that it can significantly increase the life successes of people who face challenges of debt, financial exclusion & socio-economic disadvantage. Mentoring has been most established in education, employment and vocational training but also has an established place in 'engagement' and health interventions. Mentors often provide both direct assistance (e.g. to sort out pressing debts, fill in grant, benefit, college or job applications or locate appropriate housing) and indirect support (e.g. encouragement or acting as a positive role model) that would otherwise be unavailable.

OPFS has had considerable experience of mentoring - so in developing it as part of the Transforming Lives Model staff knew what was needed and what was realistically possible to achieve.

The Transforming Lives Project was highlighted as a model of good practice by the Scottish Mentoring Network and was voted "Early Intervention Project of the Year 2012."

Young Lone Parent Views

The young lone parents taking part in the Transforming Lives programme feel that the service offered them something unique and something that was geared to their needs – whether it was money advice, budgeting, confidence building or personal and social development or preparing for the world of work

They reported that the mentors felt like someone they could trust and could tell their troubles to.

"I've never told anyone how I feel before or what it's like to be so in debt"

"Someone to speak to that was not my family – didn't judge me"

"I've always got someone now to talk to about my problems".

It was not just a listening ear that was valued - they commented that the knowledge that the mentor and co-ordinator brought helped them with their concerns and helped them approach services with more authority and confidence.

"I always need help with forms – I just looked at them and felt useless. I asked (Mentor) to help me. Now I realize how easy it is. I feel more confident".

Case Study 1

NK is a young lone parent aged 18 years old with a daughter aged 18 months who resides in Bellshill, North Lanarkshire. NK found out she was pregnant at the age of 16 years old and soon after receiving the news her partner ended their relationship and she found herself homeless. Her life had turned upside down, NK now found herself young, single, pregnant and homeless.

After NK had her daughter she lacked in confidence and self-esteem because she felt isolated and had put on weight and had no one to talk to or support her through this difficult time she was facing. NK felt isolated as she was always in the house with her new baby which led NK to develop a severe case of post-natal depression. NK couldn't face going outside alone with her daughter and her debts started piling up and she was now facing major debt issues. She didn't know where to turn and felt completely stuck in a rut. NK's health visitor put her in contact with the Transforming Lives Programme and told NK we would help build on her confidence and self-esteem. She attended the young mums training programme in her local area and this gave her the chance to meet other young lone parents. NK felt it was a great experience. It made her realise that she wasn't the only person in a difficult position. She got to meet new friends. This got her out of her comfort zone, which was mainly

staying in her house watching Jeremy Kyle. NK met with the Money Advice Worker and got all her problems with her debts sorted out. This really helped the stress levels NK was under.

The Transforming Lives Programme gave NK the opportunity to take part in confidence building training and awareness sessions on budgeting, health, parenting skills, stress management and much more. We also had information sessions from the Job Centre, Childcare Services and other service providers in our area. This gave NK a good insight into what other lone parents were going through. NK has no family support and being so isolated was difficult. The Transforming Lives Programme was a life line for this young mum. She now feels more confident, has more information on local services, is continuing to be supported and listened to by a lone parent mentor on a regular basis, and has made friends with people who have similar circumstances and issues.

All of this helped NK to get on track, find a focus for herself and her daughter, and to realise that she has a lot to offer in life! NK is now planning to undertake a college programme in the next few months in Health and Social Care

Case Study 2

AG is an 18 year old lone parent living in North Lanarkshire with two children aged 2 years and 1 year old. She became pregnant at 15 years old which made huge changes to her life. Her partner became violent and the relationship ended leaving her on her own. AG lives with her mum, dad and younger sister. She doesn't get much family support as both her parents work and after she puts her younger sister out to school she is left in the house all day on her own with the kids. This was really getting her down.

AG doesn't have a lot of money to spare and felt like the days just dragged by. AG felt that her confidence was really low and although she had her whole life ahead of her at 18 there just wasn't anything for her to do with 2 young kids. AG saw an advert in the local supermarket for a programme for Young Lone Parents. She wasn't really sure but decided there would be no harm in giving the number a call. The next day she met up with a Lone Parent Mentor from the Transforming Lives programme to find out more information about the course. This was everything that AG needed. Having somewhere to go, building a routine into her week, meeting other people in a similar situation to her, breakdown the isolation she felt and having a crèche for the kids really helped AG to build on her confidence, find a sense of purpose and look forward to the next day in her life.

AG's children really enjoyed playing with other children their own age and she got a lot out of meeting young mums her own age. She feels like she can be a teenager again. Having time for herself to make new friends and learn new skills has really helped her to feel better about herself and her future. She has now taken up volunteering and the children are happy in nursery. She now sees a bright future for herself and her kids.

Case Study 3

LB's childhood life has consisted of living in and out of care homes. LB has never really been settled or had a place to call home. LB fell pregnant at the age of 18 and is now 20 years old and has a 2 year old daughter. LB always been part of the care system but never really felt supported with how her future was going to be.

LB came into contact with One Parent Families Scotland through meeting the staff at her daughter's nursery. A survey took place which she completed. LB thought for once that someone was interested in what she was saying. She didn't show up for the first meeting and then seemed to stop answering the phone. She felt she couldn't really see the point as her confidence was low. LB felt a bit depressed and it was difficult to see what difference anything was going to make to her life. The staff still sent LB a text and a letter inviting her along to find out more about what they could offer LB on the 8 week Young Lone Parenting course that was starting. A worker met LB at her daughter's nursery and she got on really well with them as she felt they understood her and listened to her for once. LB agreed to come along with a worker on the first day cause as she felt really nervous about meeting new people.

LB found it really difficult at first, the course started at 9.30am and she wasn't used to getting up till around lunch time. The staff would call her in the morning at about 8am so that she was up and organised. LB found this hard initially but eventually realised that the staff did this because they "cared" , something she felt she hadn't really had this experience before. With the support of the Transforming Lives programme LB was able to change her routine and made a commitment to go along each morning for the course. This was really good for her and she started to make friends with people who lived in similar situations. The course programme was really helpful to LB and taking part helped her to build on her confidence, learn how to control her anger, get on with people and start to take an interest in herself.

LB feels she has a purpose to her day now. This gives her a sense of purpose for her future as she wants her daughter to grow up happy, stable and ambitious. LB now realises that the Transforming Lives Programme can help her to achieve this.

Project Outcomes

The work we deliver is on an individual, and group basis. Over the last year we have strengthened and developed areas of work to promote capacity building in terms of our own services and to increase the social impact of our work with service users and communities. The Transforming Lives programme project outcomes are as follows:

1. Young lone parents will take up training, education and employment opportunities
2. Young lone parents will access services that will support them in their role as a parent

3. Young lone parents will move on in their lives and further prepare for their future
4. A model will be developed that can be replicated in other local authority areas.

Total number of outcomes achieved

Project Outcomes	Outcomes Achieved by Individual Parents
1	43 young parents are now participating in volunteering, education, training, volunteering or employment opportunities 57 young parents are now better prepared for further learning or entering employment in the work place
2	53 young lone parents have reported that they now felt less isolated and better supported within their own communities and now accessed a range of services including: NHS, Parenting groups, Sport and Leisure services, Young Mums groups, Barnardos programmes etc.
3	53 young people are more independent & able to manage their finances.
4	The model is now being replicated in Glasgow and there are discussion currently taking place to discuss the possibility of the programme being developed in Mid Lothian.

Unintended Outcomes

The transition to parenthood is a major one: changing relationships between the mother and her child's father, family and friends. For a teenager making the transition to adulthood is difficult enough; combining it with the transition to motherhood is even more significant.

- Many of the participants taking part in the Transforming Lives Programme reported that the project was fun. That it allowed them to be themselves again. Not to be only a mum. It gave them the opportunity to engage with other young mums who had the same issues and barriers and provide peer support to each other.
- It was also been widely recognised by facilitators, childcare staff and the parents themselves that their parenting capacity has been further developed. Young parents participating in the programme highlighted that they felt more relaxed, patient and more aware of strategies to cope with their children and at some times their challenging behaviour.
- Regular intensive mentoring support was provided to all young mums and this has significantly changed their lifestyle. Lone Parent Mentors

accompanied young parents to housing department, where the complexity of forms and processes is intimidating for the young person, to counselling sessions, to social work departments, to police stations and court appearances. Young parents on the programme indicated that with the support of a Mentor they were now able to address issues they felt were out with their control and now had the chance to move on in their lives.

- Young Parents were supported to move to more sustainable tenancies and trained in better money management.
- The children really enjoyed playing with other children their own age and making new friends of children living in their own community
- New partnerships have developed with YMCA, Barnardos, William Grant Trust and local voluntary and statutory organisations. These partnerships have allowed OPFS to be in the forefront of developing further services in North Lanarkshire for young parents.
- Public Sector Service providers, particularly Maternal and Child health Services, Early Years and Job Centre have increased awareness of young parents needs and many contacts say they are now more likely to respond to the needs of teenage parents.

Conclusion

Research suggests that the more investment in the development of a child's early years, the better his/her life-chances, including learning, happiness and better health, particularly mental health. (*Buchanan, A. 2011. Maximising the potential of children in the Early Years. David Hume Institute seminar paper.*)

Children who have problems may become parents who have problems – there are strong links between parental mental health and child well-being. Over the life course children/adults with problems cost a lot of money due to the costs of managing mental health, alcoholism, drug abuse and potential criminality, plus the lack of earnings in adult life added to the cost of welfare. A study by *Scott et al.* found that a child in the UK with a conduct disorder will cost an estimated £70,019 compared with £7,423 for a child with 'no problems' (*Scott, S., Knapp, M. and Henderson, J. 2001. Financial cost of social exclusion: Follow up study of antisocial children into adulthood. British Medical Journal, 323, 191–194*)

The OPFS approach aims to build long term sustainable change in the lives of young parents most at risk by focusing on the causes, as well as the consequences, of poverty and disadvantage. This involves working beyond reacting to problems after they arise, by taking an early intervention approach and identifying key areas of unmet need, as disparities in unmet need contribute to even wider gaps in child wellbeing. No matter the setting, it is possible to reduce unmet with carefully chosen and well implemented interventions.

Transforming Lives aims to strengthen the connectedness of young parents and their families with services, including health, housing, education and employability. As well as building individual parents capacity & resilience the service aims are to build social capital for this vulnerable group, to increase knowledge and links with services, and to enable services to more effectively identify and meet needs with early intervention strategies rather than at crisis points.

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Appendix 1
Quantitative Data – Nov 2012

Data Required	Numbers
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Number of primary beneficiaries	61
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Age of primary beneficiaries	0-5 yrs	65
	6-11 yrs	
	12-16 yrs	
	16+ yrs	61

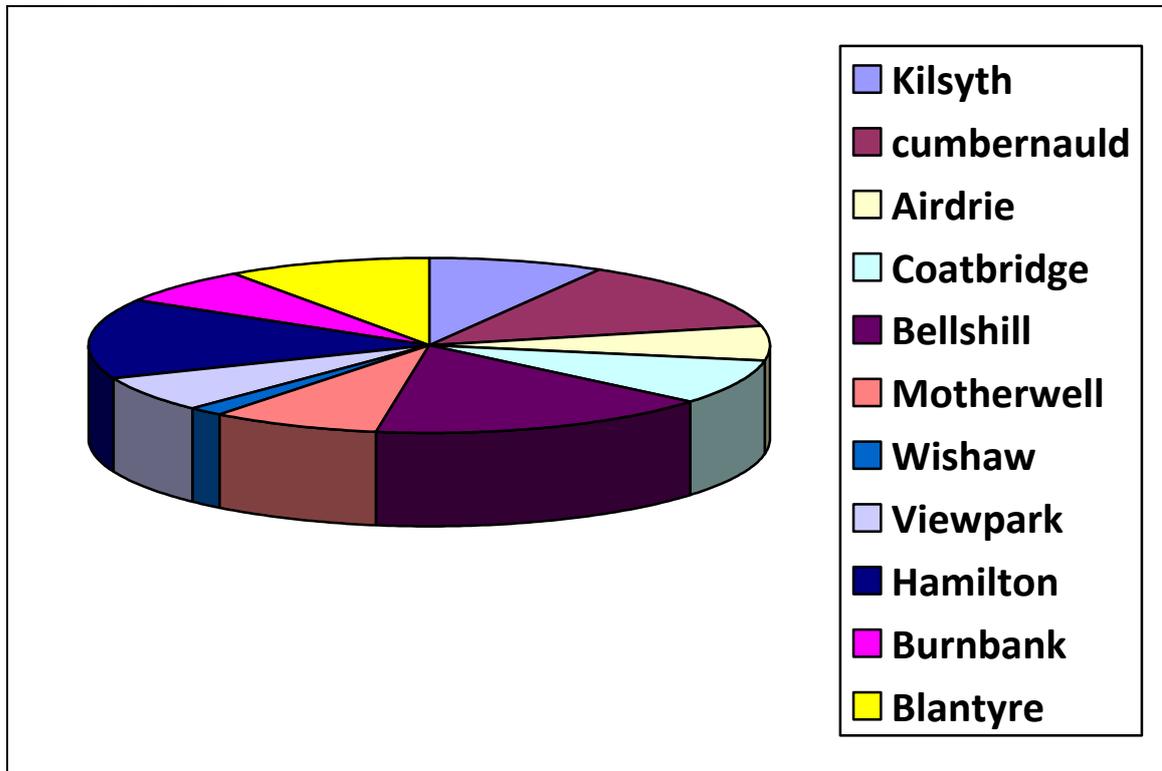
Gender of primary beneficiaries	Female	101
	Male	25

Ethnicity of primary beneficiaries	White	British	126
		Irish	
		Other	
	Asian or Asian British	Indian	
		Pakistani	
		Bangladeshi	
		Other	

Data Required	Numbers
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Number of secondary beneficiaries (i.e. siblings/wider family)	65
Statutory organisations working with	15
Referred to other organisations pre-programme	18
Referred to other organisations post-programme	59
Completed programme	59

Areas Covered



Transforming Lives has worked with 32 young mums and 35 of their children offering them new choices, encouraged them to take chances and supported them through any changes all with a view of enhancing their future job opportunities or a more positive lifestyle for themselves and their children.

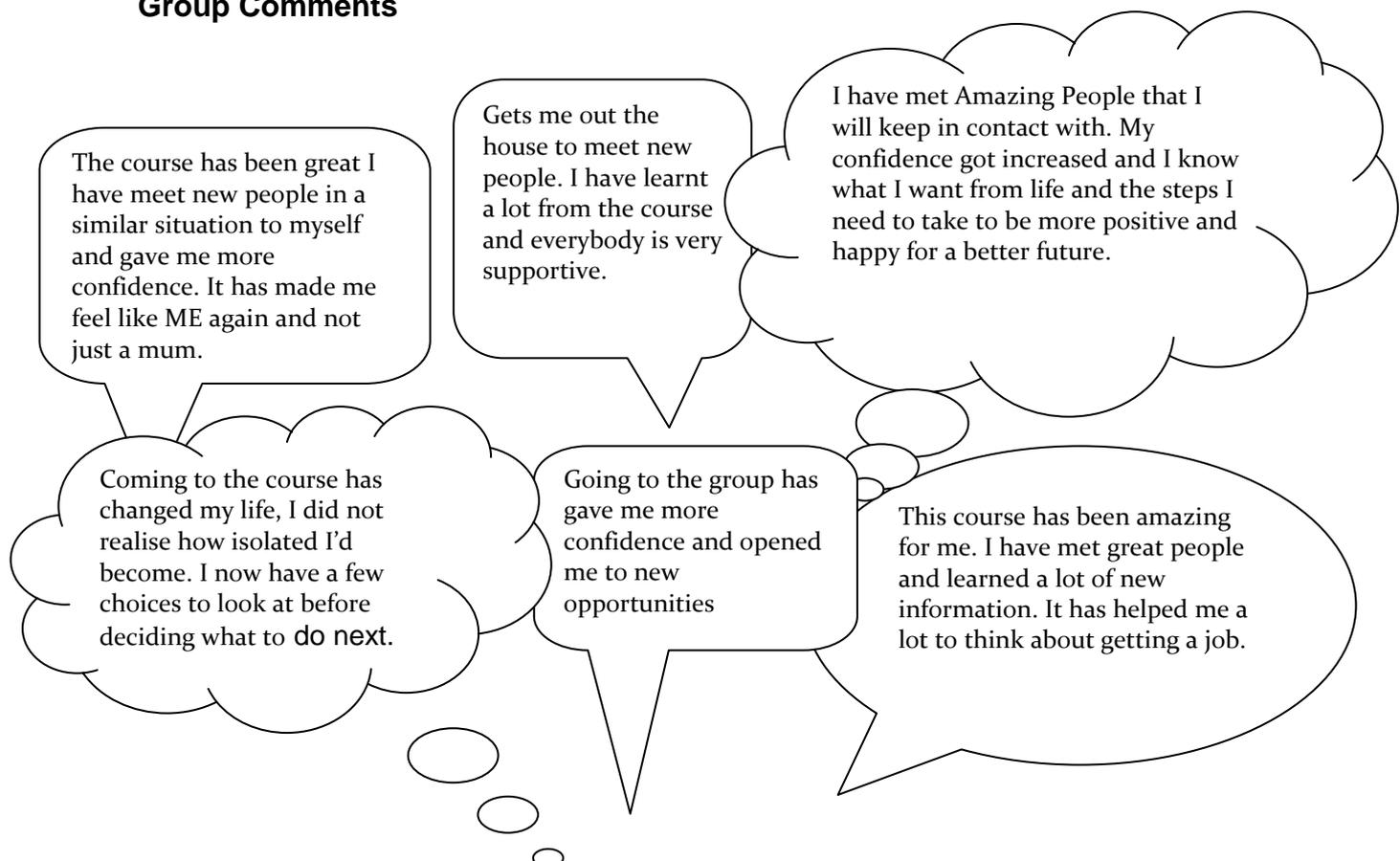
ACHIEVEMENTS

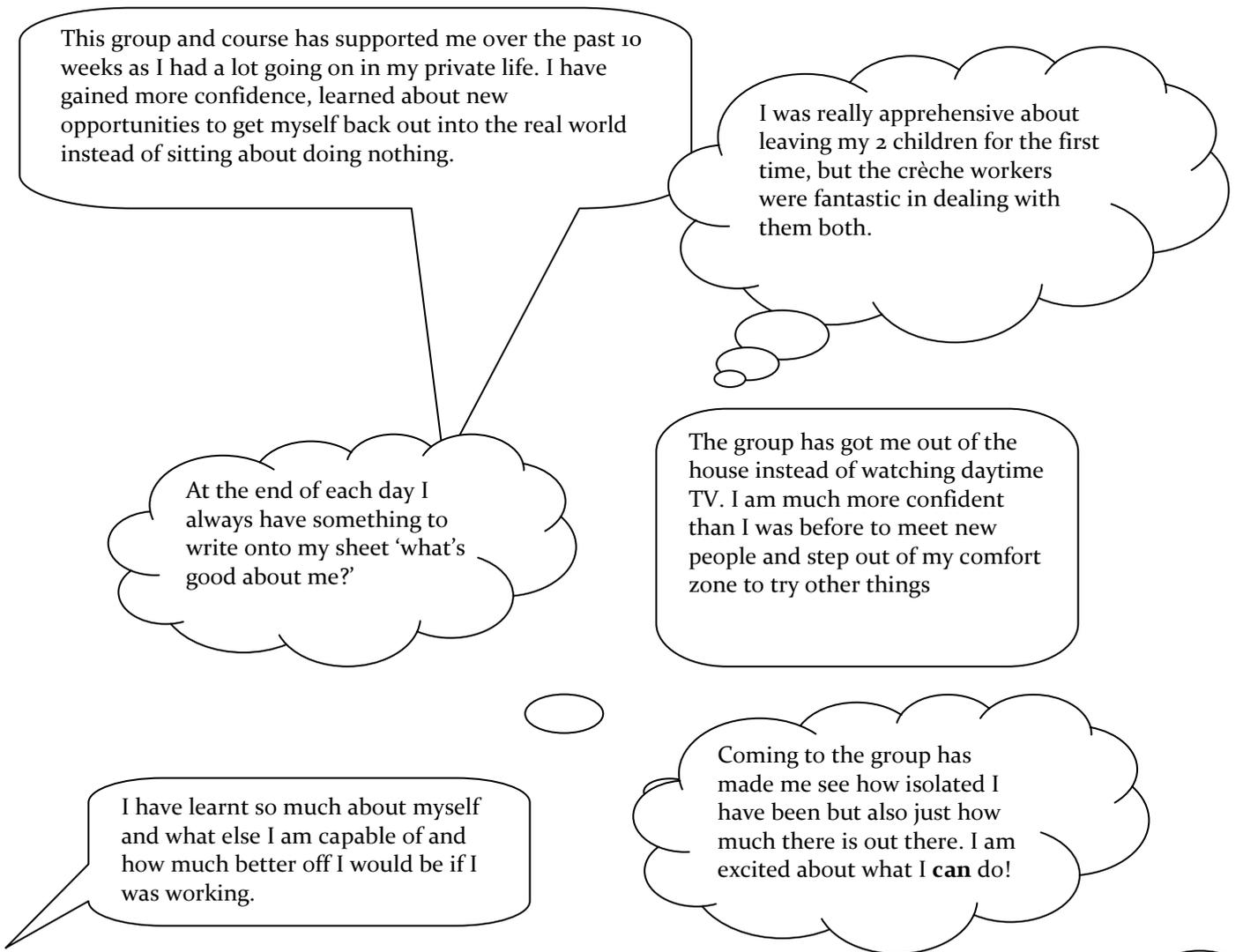
- Many of our participants have made new friends within the groups therefore reducing their feeling of isolation.
- There are several participants who come into the course like lambs and leave like lions with greatly increased confidence.
- We were nominated for an award with Scottish Mentoring Network and won best programme for early interventions.
- Several participants have moved into work, engaged in further training and education as well as attending other courses within their areas to further developing their skills
- Participants gain a better insight to who they are and what they would like to do and how to go about it.

REFERENCES

These are available from numerous participants on the course and their families as well as staff members who have witnessed the changes in the young mum's with whom we have had the pleasure in working with.

Appendix 3 Group Comments





Appendix 4 Transforming Lives

Aims: To empower young parents, with the support & skills they need to prepare for the future, increase family wellbeing and progress along the employability pathway to achieve economic independence. To build social capital for this vulnerable group, to increase knowledge and links with services, and to enable services to more effectively identify and meet needs with early intervention strategies rather than at crisis points.

