

MELVA

Commissioner Case Study & Information Pack

Academic Years
23/24 and 24/25



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MELVA Headteacher



About the MELVA programme:

MELVA is an award-winning, creative, digital media programme, which improves children and young people’s knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing, and teaches them practical self management techniques

It is a user-friendly, early intervention and prevention approach, designed to be used by schools with children aged 7-11 (Key Stage 2), or with older children in specialist provision settings.

The programme centres around the character of Melva Mapletree: a nearly-11-year-old girl whose struggles with anxiety, trauma and bereavement (or ‘worrits’ as she calls them) are keeping her from doing new things or even wanting to leave the cottage she lives in with her Grandpa.

Through creative storytelling, engaging characters, and practical activities, children learn alongside Melva about how to recognise, understand, talk about and manage their mental wellbeing and deal with their ‘worrits’.

Why is MELVA needed right now?

There is a children’s wellbeing crisis in the UK. Public Health England state that at least 1 in 5 children aged 7-16 have a diagnosable mental health condition. That’s an average of 6 children per classroom.

We urgently need new, accessible, multi-agency approaches to tackling this crisis. MELVA is a proven, fun, and impactful way for teachers to work with whole classes, addressing wellbeing issues before children reach crisis point and reducing referrals to over-stretched statutory services.

It is facilitated through creative and practical activities, with an emphasis on learning by doing. The resources and evaluation tools are rooted in ratified and recognised wellbeing research, such as the PERMA™ framework and the NHS 5 steps to wellbeing.



What school gets access to:

MELVA Digital Portal

Each school receives a unique school login for the full MELVA online portal, where they can access:

- **3 different MELVA themed programmes**, each designed to be delivered over the course of 8 lessons and adapted for different age groups,
- **The MELVA Teacher Area**, housing all necessary resources, evaluation documents and admin guides, a bank of extension activities and themed assemblies, communication packs, and signposted links to other relevant mental health services and networks,
- **A simple evaluation report** at the end of the year produced by Mortal Fools (subject to proper and full completion and submission of evaluation requirements)

See page 11 for details of new MELVA content coming September 2025!



Support for School Staff:

As part of their licence, schools also receive training and tailored support from the MELVA team, including:

- Introductory sessions to support the implementation of MELVA in their school
- In person and Digital Teacher CPD Sessions on topics such as **Emotional Resilience for Staff & Avoiding Burnout** and **Managing Difficult Conversations & Cultivating Positive Relationships**
- Bookable 1:1 surgery slots with the MELVA team and a dedicated MELVA email (monitored throughout school hours)
- Facilitated conversation with other MELVA schools, to discuss their experiences and common issues arising around mental health and wellbeing in schools
- Termly newsletters, sharing best practice and programme updates

Partnership with North of Tyne Combined Authority in Academic Year 23/24:



In June 2024, we were awarded £31,875 by North of Tyne Combined Authority, to provide the MELVA programme free of charge to up to 50 schools across Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside.

This funding resulted in:

- **3,077 children** participating within the North of Tyne Area
- **Over 850 sessions** delivered in school
- **3 x Teacher CPD Sessions**, including 1 x full in-person day
- **4 x additional support sessions for Teachers**



Demonstrating Impact:

Schools were asked to complete two simple evaluation activities to help us demonstrate and provide evidence of impact:

- **Baseline and End of Programme Assessments:** These are used to assess students' overall understanding, knowledge and recall of the topics and learning objectives that each MELVA programme focuses on. They are completed twice per intervention - once at the start during the first session, and once after completion.
- **End of Session PERMA™ Feedback and Reflections:** These are used to gather feedback on the overall enjoyment of the programme, and to rate the levels of wellbeing presented during MELVA sessions. Further detail about the PERMA™ framework is provided on page 6.

Through this data driven approach, as well as qualitative feedback from school staff and students, we were able to demonstrate the hugely positive impact that taking part in the MELVA programme has on children. We have provided an overview of the data we received from a sample of schools in this report.

23/24 Evaluation Data:

Baseline and End of Programme Assessments

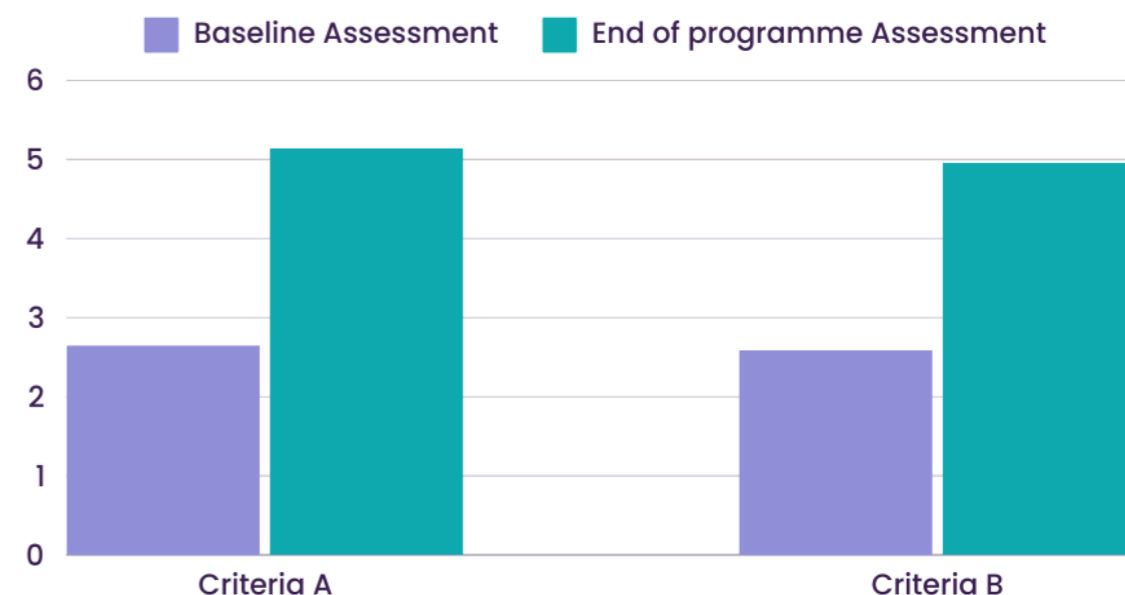
Students completed a short assessment activity before and after taking part in the MELVA programme. Teachers then rated their responses across two main criteria:

- **Criteria A:** Depth and breadth of their understanding of mental health and wellbeing topics
- **Criteria B:** Depth and breadth of their knowledge of practical tools and techniques to manage and maintain their mental health and wellbeing

Ratings were made on a scale of 1 – 6:

1 = Very Poor 2 = Poor 3 = Reasonable 4 = Good 5 = Strong 6 = Very Strong

| Average improvement across all North of Tyne schools: <i>Figures are based on data received from a sample of approx. 10% of the user base</i> | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| | Baseline | End | % improvement |
| Criteria A | 2.65 <i>Poor to Reasonable</i> | 5.14 <i>Strong</i> | +94% |
| Criteria B | 2.59 <i>Poor to Reasonable</i> | 4.96 <i>Good to Strong</i> | +99% |



23/24 End of Session PERMA™ data:

At the end of each session, students and staff were asked to complete two simple forms which help us to

- a. gather feedback about that session, and
- b. rate the levels of wellbeing present during the MELVA sessions using a framework called PERMA™

About the PERMA™ Framework and Positive Psychology:

The PERMA™ framework is a model developed by Dr Martin Seligman and the studies in Positive Psychology to represent the presence of wellbeing.

“Wellbeing” can be a nebulous concept. It means different things to different people, and therefore can be extremely challenging to measure and quantify. However, at Mortal Fools, we have found the PERMA™ model to be extremely useful in providing a clear guide to help us create the conditions which the research indicates best supports people to flourish and thrive.

PERMA™ is an acronym for five building blocks of mental wellbeing, which enables us to thrive and flourish:

Positive Emotions

Engagement

Relationships

Meaning and

Achievement

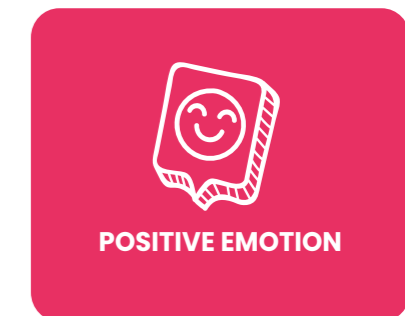
By tracking and rating the presence of these building blocks throughout the MELVA sessions, we can demonstrate that taking part in the programme provides a positive experience for the young people.

In this report, we’ve provided an overview of how the different PERMA™ building blocks were rated by students and teachers across the sessions. These figures are based on data received from 25 schools (approx 50% of user base) and they show:

- the average rating for each PERMA™ building block across the sessions delivered,
- the percentage of sessions in which each PERMA™ building block was rated highly (at least 4 out of 5).

“They [the children] were fully immersed in the activities.”

Example of a MELVA Teacher reflection for the PERMA™ building block of Engagement



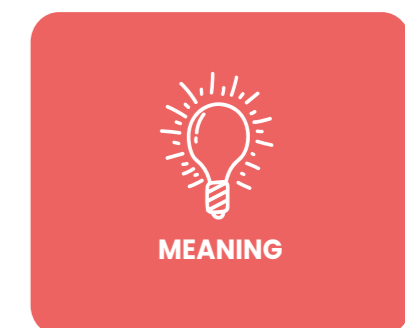
Average PERMA™ building session ratings (out of 5)

| | Student* Rating: | Teacher** Rating: |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Positive Emotion | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| Engagement | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| Relationships | 3.8 | 3.9 |
| Meaning | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Achievement | 4.0 | 4.0 |



% of highly rated PERMA™ sessions (at least 4 out of 5)

| | Student rating: | Teacher rating: |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Positive Emotion | 81% | 76% |
| Engagement | 79% | 77% |
| Relationships | 61% | 68% |
| Meaning | 67% | 73% |
| Achievement | 67% | 72% |



* Average from 281 submissions by students

** Average from 212 submissions by teachers

Qualitative Feedback: Baseline and End of Programme Assessments

Teacher Reflections:

When assessing the children's End of Programme Assessment, every child has progressed and improved - some a great deal.

Children thought about all the ways to help our wellbeing which they learnt throughout the programme. One child even said that doing MELVA helps health and wellbeing.

Children are now more able to discuss their wellbeing and verbalise examples to support the discussions we have had in class. They are using practical strategies such as finger breathing when they need to and will relate what they're thinking to things they have talked about on MELVA. The class really benefited from taking part.

All children have a higher score compared to the baseline assessment, and there were so many brilliant ideas shared about what they can do to help their wellbeing.



General Feedback

Hawthorn Primary School – Newcastle

MELVA has been an amazing resource. The training and support for staff has been great. The online resources are fantastic and the children engage so well with them. It really supports the children to reflect and think about others as well as their own mental health and wellbeing.

Jane Dube, Headteacher

Qualitative Feedback: End of Session Feedback Forms

Teacher Reflections:

The activities gave them an avenue to build their confidence, begin to share with others and have their own ideas.

Excellent engagement, in particular by a small group of boys who had previously not engaged in sessions.

The children were glued to the film. They identified similar worries and enjoyed talking about them. Most of the children said that children of 10-11 have a lot of worries. They found the film funny and can't wait until the next lesson! We ended up talking about the SATS that are coming up. A really good lesson!

They found out how to be resilient and took ideas from each other about what their individual skills are - we will keep reinforcing this during lessons.

The children really engaged with the interactive activities and some children who are usually hesitant to interact and use their voice blossomed. Using the poster of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing each lesson and referencing to it during sessions is helping the depth of the children's knowledge.

Today's film was emotional and the children all thought that Mammy Mapletree had died. This initiated some conversations about their own losses. They wanted to tell me what they thought their loved ones would say to them to encourage them. It was a really lovely moment.

Pupils enjoyed learning different methods to get emotional energy out of their body - rubber chicken worked really well and I will use this in lessons as a movement break too.

Pupil Reflections:

Today's lesson made us feel kind, happy and helpful.

The activities were fun and made me feel happier.

I felt positive emotion because it was different from what we usually do



Increased Commission in Academic Year 2024/25:



Following the successful pilot programme, we went on to be commissioned by the new North East Combined Authority to provide up to 100 licences to schools across all 7 local authority areas: County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

This was funded at a total cost of £116,000, increased to reflect the additional costs associated with working with a greater number of schools, such as:

- Additional marketing costs for recruiting schools
- Additional administration and production costs for training and on-boarding schools
- Increased licence costs following portal improvements and content developments



24/25 Predictions

Thanks to this commission from NECA we expect to:

- **Reach over 100 school settings** across the North East
- **Support over 10,000 children** and young people
- **Deliver over 25 hours of training** and support sessions for teachers and school staff
- **Train over 100 teachers** and school staff, developing their skills and confidence in delivering wellbeing education and support in school

This funding has also enabled us to make vital improvements and additions to the MELVA digital programme and portal, based on our own learning as well as feedback from school users.

New additions to the MELVA programme:

From September 2025, we will be adding new programmes and features to our MELVA licence offer, including:

NEW: Year 6 Intervention

From September 2025, schools will have access to an additional MELVA programme aimed predominantly at Year 6s.

The programme will be facilitated through the medium of a new, illustrated, MELVA novel, with wraparound resources and activities. The story focuses on more challenging mental health and wellbeing topics, such as bereavement, self-harm and suicidal ideation, as well as other personal themes relevant to this age range such as puberty and transition.

The book is being developed in consultation with [Kalmer Counselling](#) – one of the leading Counselling services in the North East of England

Our aim is to get the MELVA Book into the hands of every Year 6 child in Northumberland, and eventually the whole of the North East.



NEW: KS1 resources

We'll be adding some simple resources and activities appropriate for use with pupils in Key Stage One, to help integrate the MELVA vocabulary and learning across the whole school approach. This addition is in direct response to content requests from our current MELVA schools and teachers.

EXTRA: CPD sessions

We are adding more support and CPD sessions to the MELVA programme each year and in 2025/26, we intend to run at least 1 additional in person CPD day, to help accommodate the wider geographical spread of our MELVA schools.

Running 1 x in person CPD day within the relevant Local or Combined Authority Area could form part of an agreement with future Commissioners.

To discuss commissioning MELVA or to find out more about the programme, contact the MELVA team via email on melva@mortalfools.org.uk

Help us spread the MELVA motto...

Brave isn't how you feel,
it's what you do.

About Mortal Fools

Mortal Fools are a theatre, drama and creative learning company supporting children and young people (aged 7–25) across high impact creative interventions, projects and regular youth theatre groups.

All our work focuses on engaging, enabling and empowering young people, enhancing wellbeing, and cultivating employability and emotional development. We work with a wide variety of children and young people – many with intersectional needs – in schools, youth settings and the communities like Ashington in Northumberland.

We also deliver communications and leadership training via our **CONNECT training** programme to businesses, third sector organisations, teams, and individuals. All income earned through this goes back into our work with children and young people.

Find out more by visiting our website and socials



www.mortalfools.org.uk