

Case study from Liverpool Parent Infant Partnership (LivPIP)



A family self-referred after mum suffered double pneumonia and then developed psychosis after the birth of her baby. Dad had become the primary carer, and mum was feeling distant from her baby. LivPIP offered a four-way approach – parent-infant work with mum and baby, family therapy with whole family offered jointly with Early Intervention in Psychosis team, Cognitive-Analytic Therapy for mum and medication.

Work with the family has enabled a contained exploration of anxiety and risky behaviours for everyone in family; i.e. how dad felt anxious about mum's psychotic experiences and responded in a way that set up a negative cycle whereby mum lost even more confidence. Issues around the communication of love and affection within the family were also addressed.

Most sessions were with mum and baby, sometimes dad attended also. The baby was observed to often reach for mum or dad but then not always receiving attention or comfort. The baby would sometimes become so frustrated that she would hit herself. Parents appeared helpless as well as unaware of their baby's needs.

The therapist discussed with the parents their extended families and how those past relationships worked. There were unresolved issues surrounding the pregnancy, which had been unplanned, unexpected and unwanted by father; and the birth which was unexpectedly traumatic.

The work included helping dad to step back a little to allow mum to gain more self-reliance and also to build mum's confidence by reflecting back little and larger successes observed, such as mum's ability to comfort baby and baby's use of mum as a secure base.

Using KIPS * helped mum to observe positive moments in their interaction, but mum also initially picked up that she was not interacting with baby very much. Currently, mum has started to be more active in the play with her baby. The therapist has observed many loving moments between them and, critically, mum has accepted that she really does have the ability to comfort her baby.

Dad has stepped back a bit and given space for mum and baby's relationship to grow. Mum is more confident and is increasingly enjoying more time with baby without dad having to be there.

- KIPs is an evidence based-tool for assessing parenting strengths and needs in diverse families.