**Case Study 8.**

**Families First – Emotional Wellbeing Service (ACTION FOR CHILDREN)**

Kel is an 11-year-old young person who was referred to the service due to excessive anxiety. Kel was also struggling socially, experiencing low mood and waiting to be assessed for Autism. Due to these issues, Kel stayed within the safety of familiar people and places which limited their life experiences. Kel also struggled when they didn’t get their own way. It was felt that therapeutic support could expand Kel’s window of tolerance, develop their ability to take a more flexible approach and improve their social skills.

School was a particularly difficult place for Kel. We agreed that sessions would be held in school as this also offered the opportunity for Kel to make positive associations with school. During the assessment I noted that more active and playful sessions would be needed to allow Kel to engage with and tolerate therapeutic work. Kel benefitted from a strengths-based approach which highlighted and consolidated their qualities and achievements rather than having a more problem-orientated focus.

Through games and play, I was able to model resilience, and alternative ways of coping and managing challenging situations. An example of a particularly successful intervention was through the use of paper aeroplanes. Kel and I made aeroplanes together. However, Kel’s did not fly well. Whilst they struggled on their own for a while, soon Kel was able to independently seek my support, and we collaborated to build a plane together which flew well. I was able to show Kel exactly what steps to take, where fingers could be placed, and mirrored Kel as they navigated the task- noting what was difficult for Kel and finding an alternative. I also used genuine praise and playfulness to encourage Kel through the activity. This ensured they remained within their window of tolerance whilst also challenging them to manage their emotional discomfort and increase their resilience. Kel was then left with a before and after paper aeroplane and the joy of success. Kel was elated they had succeeded and had something physical to show for their efforts. Whilst therapeutic work doesn’t always have a tangible outcome, this activity gave Kel something they could hold on to so they could see the difference between the two planes and the two ways of doing things. This allowed Kel to see their capabilities and alternative ways of doing things. This also taught Kel that they did not need to change to fit other people’s needs and standards, but they could seek out help in a way that better supported them and met their needs.

By the end of our therapeutic sessions, Kel had grown in confidence. This enabled them to engage with a more attuned level of support where Kel could share their worries and their dislikes. Kel benefitted from working with a therapist who met them at their level, matched their energy and was curious about finding a way of working which met their needs. Consequently, Kel became able to independently seek out solutions to their problems and in a way which was good for them.

Kel’s mum found it encouraging to hear from a professional how well their child was doing. Their mum felt reassured that Kel could engage positively in school when they received more flexible support pitched at their level of need. For mum, encouragement from Ynys Mon Emotional Wellbeing Service gave her a better insight into the potential support provided by other agencies which will guide her future expectations of other services.

Without support both Kel and their mum would have continued to struggle and feel isolated. Kel would’ve continued to feel pressure to adapt to other peoples’ ways of doing things and experience a lack of self-belief. This could’ve further impacted negatively on Kel’s emotional wellbeing, resulting in increased social isolation and the potential for future mental health problems. As a result of this support, Kel can now aspire to greater things and build a healthier relationship with themselves, with others, and with the world around them. Kel now understands that there are people who can help them, and they are allowed to ask for this help when they need it.