**PIMHS Case Study – October – December 2024**

Baby Grace was referred to the Parent-Infant Mental Health Service by her health visitor. The referral was for support for Grace’s father David who reported he was struggling to bond with Grace. Grace was 4 months old when the PIMHS therapist met with them. David was unsure of exactly what he needed but appreciated the space to talk and express his feelings. The family also had a three-year-old son and David felt that his experience of bonding with Grace had been quite different to his son.

It became apparent that there were a number of factors having an impact on David’s relationship with Grace. Just before Grace was born, there was a fire at the family home. The family were at home and had to leave quickly. The fire damage meant they had to be re-housed and they found themselves in a different home with none of the preparations they had made for the arrival of their new baby. David felt quite traumatised by this and was also concerned about the impact on his son. He took on a lot of the responsibility for sorting out somewhere to live, speaking to the insurance company and making huge decisions about the future for the family.

Grace arrived in amongst all of this. There were some health concerns after birth, Grace needed a lot of tests and feeding was hard to establish. David was also running his own business so needed to work whilst also caring for his family. They had found a new home, but David reported lots of problems and that ‘it just didn’t feel like home’.

David felt so unsettled in the new house that we agreed for the therapy sessions to take place away from the home. He found it easier to talk and open up whilst walking, so we met weekly at a local beauty spot. David brought Grace in her carrier which became an important part of their bonding. He described going through the motions of caring for her but just not ‘feeling it’. He was clearly a hands-on father who lit up when speaking about his son, but it was apparent that the traumatic events around Grace’s birth had had an impact. David reported feeling like his head was full, with no space to think.

David was able to process some of his feelings about the fire, moving home, his anger at being in a house that wasn’t his own and his feelings of responsibility.

Gradually, he became more aware of his fear of losing Grace and his family because of the fire; and also because of Grace’s health needs that were very unclear for a while. In amongst this, David also explored the possibility that he may be neurodivergent. He had been thinking about whether he had ADHD and recognised that some of his ways of thinking and acting were factors that caused tension in his relationships. He decided to pursue an assessment which he did with the support of the therapist.

Gradually, David began to enjoy Grace more. On our walks, he liked to show her the trees and squirrels and by processing some of his feelings, created space in his mind for her. He was able to ‘see’ Grace rather than just think of her as the baby who arrived amongst all this chaos.

By the end of this short-term piece of work, David felt that his relationship with Grace was completely different and that she would seek him for comfort and delight.