

## Infant-Family Case Study 2



The referral was from a midwife, concerned about a family that was hard to engage. The mother was deeply suspicious of all ‘official’ help, rightly so from her point of view as three other boys had been accommodated and adopted following abuse. She had no contact with any of them.

However, she was in a relationship with a new partner who was the father of the unborn baby and with his support was not taking any harmful substances while pregnant. The family was struggling with many risks including poor housing. She had been in care all her life with no stable home setting, instead having a series of children’s homes and foster parents. She had suffered from neglect and multiple traumas before being taken into care aged two, and afterwards as well – including coming home one day to discover the body of her foster father who had hung himself.

When the previous baby was born she had developed puerperal psychosis, and with the first two had suffered from severe post-natal depression. With the luxury of knowing that the baby was, at least for the moment, fairly safe, so time was on their side, the PIP therapist struck lucky and was eventually able to form a therapeutic alliance with her, although at first more often than not nobody answered the door for the appointment.

Thus before the baby was born the therapist was able to address some of the many “ghosts in the nursery” from this mother’s troubled past as well as support both parents with problems they were currently struggling with.

The therapist, with some trepidation, backed up the mother’s decision that she would prefer not to go to a mother and baby unit many miles away, as she felt the home situation was more supportive than before. The work continued after the birth and the mother felt able to attend the local children’s centre, which was an invaluable source of support.

This time no mental health problems developed and the mother also made a positive engagement with her health visitor. Regular meetings continued and the infant showed all the signs of a secure attachment and demonstrated normal social and emotional development on the ASQ: SE measure. Eventually they moved out of area and contact was lost; although a year later the therapist, by chance bumped into the father who reported that all was still going well.