

Ella (age 36) and Harvey (2mths)
7 sessions

| | Start | Review | End |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| HADS | | | |
| Total | 16 | 7 | |
| Anxiety | 12 | 5 | |
| Depression | 4 | 2 | |
| PIRGAS | 72 | 78 | 83 |

Ella and Harvey's story

Ella had had post natal depression with her older son, [older child], so knew that she might be vulnerable with her second. She noticed early on that she was finding it difficult to bond with Harvey and bravely discussed these feelings with her health visitor who responded immediately and made a referral to NorPIP. Ella's mood improved quickly, her relationship with Harvey flourished and she describes being a strong advocate for NorPIP with other parents now.

A message from Ella:

'At six weeks old I was triggered by casual words into a world of PND for a second time. I was recommended to NorPIP and Gail took me under her wing, I felt safe I was able to open up to a complete stranger to help me get things straight in my head and allow me to bond again with my youngest, because of the kindness, the advice, and counseling which you don't even realise you're having!! My youngest and I are so close now. Thanks in words or saying it just doesn't seem enough, they changed my negative into a massive positive. If you need help please go and see the team or get your health visitor to recommend you to them they are amazing and will help you. Thank you Norpip" Ella mum of 2.

In her own words (taken from an interview transcript):

When the asthma nurse said at 6 weeks 'Most parents I know would panic' – that set me on a spiral, thinking I should have been panicking. So then when the health visitor asked I said I'm having some real issues bonding with him. I was in such a daze I don't know how I felt, I was willing to accept any help. The referral was a bit of a relief – finally someone else would listen.

I saw [the NorPIP therapist] every 2-3 weeks for a good 3-4 months. It worked out really well – it was about 4/5 weeks from referral to seeing her – the service was there when I needed it. I didn't want to talk in a group, I've had bad experiences – I was lovely to have the space to talk 1:1.

It was really good. A place where I could vent and be me. Nothing was expected of me. It was a nice environment – [my therapist] was really friendly and always made it feel like she had the time, it wasn't a waste of time and there was stuff in there – it made me reassess things in my head.

The first session

I gave her a full history, the basis of what was happening with Harvey, she said 'we can look at this bit and this bit as well'.

It wasn't what I expected. I didn't know what to expect, I was quite anxious. [Therapist] was the most kind-hearted and friendly person, she was so relaxing, I felt comfortable with her. There was no pressure, she wanted to meet Harvey, also offered me sessions later on involving my other son and Chris as well if I needed them. I didn't expect her just to sit and listen, I expected her to probe. No matter which tangent I went off on it wasn't a problem, she brought it back round but it wasn't a problem. It was really nice not to feel pressured.

What happened in the sessions?

It was just listening. We had playtime with Harvey which was fun. She had stuff out on the floor, and would see how I interacted. She just listened. The time spent with Harvey was lovely, we played on the floor, talked about how he was developing. It was Harvey's time as well. Seeing how much my position with him had changed. I don't know what it's called – she just had the skill. It was always 'how is it with you' – not just about the boys... I wish I knew the word, it's just magic, that's what I'd class it as.

I grew with it... so we talked through all the stuff with Harvey and the bond with Harvey, it came back within a few weeks anyway. Actually, I don't think it ever disappeared but then I could see it again.

How do you think Harvey found the sessions?

He's probably too young to remember it. He enjoyed the time, enjoyed playing on the floor. It might have been nice for a couple of sessions to be just for me, I know that's not the point of it, it's about my bond with Harvey but when they're awake you want to play – he wants attention so it's finding that balance.

Was anything surprising?

How it worked – you always come out of therapy [in other settings] and you feel really rubbish, I never came out of these sessions like that – I came out bouncing. Never any 'oh I've just raked up my whole past'... I've vented, I don't have those issues in my head any more. Focusing on the present was good, I've covered the past so many times – we did cover some of the past but even on those sessions it was just – relief. I've never experienced counselling like it. I really wish I had it with [older child].

What do you think has changed?

My bond with him – it's so much stronger. It was just being rebuilt again when started seeing [therapist], from that point it did just keep getting stronger. It was

more current - she could see the bond, and I could see the improvement in the bond.

My husband saw my PND stabilising, and me stabilising out. I don't think anyone else had a clue what was going on. If it hadn't been for her I think I might have left my husband - she sorted my head out, helped me realise that I wasn't being selfish in the way I was feeling and what was going on. I was finding it difficult dealing with his anxiety and depression and what he was doing.

What message would you give to other parents?

Don't be scared. It works, it's changed my relationship with Harvey, rebuilt it and made it stronger. Just don't be scared, it's not about judgement it's about you, focuses on you not everyone else, you and your baby - that was the big thing for me. It's magic.

What message would you give to commissioners?

It just helps. I hate that they want to take services away that help people. I don't know how she did what she did, I wish I could take it and bottle it because you'd make millions. People need this service.

You don't want people to end up being depressed later on in life. Through talking to [therapist] I've been able to see the signs and move forward.

It's not available on the maternity unit - that's really annoying. You can identify people in hospital but they're not. My midwife never picked up on it - maybe I would have been seen sooner. So they need to give money to NorPIP but also need to give a link between hospital and NorPIP too. In the antenatal care - you need to know what might happen, that there are people there to support you.

What would you have liked to be different?

I know she was pretty solidly booked. They need more resource more than anything else. [After therapy had finished] she checked in to see how I was doing - she shouldn't care any more but she does.

With [older child] I'd never even heard they exist - it's not known, more midwives and health visitors need to know about it.

The only thing I'd change is perhaps one or two sessions, one at the beginning and one in the middle on your own - to tell your story, to have that space.