**Parent-infant relationship antenatal support pathway**

**1. Initial Assessment & Screening**

**Objective**: To identify any immediate concerns or risk factors in the parent-infant relationship.

**Key Activities**:

* + **Complete initial assessment**, including likert scale as a baseline (record on S1)
	+ **Focus on containment**
	+ Ask about finding out about the pregnancy, how she fond out, who she told.
	+ **Where appropriate screen for mental health**: Depression, anxiety, stress, history of trauma, and domestic violence.
	+ **Identifying risk factors**: Past history of difficult pregnancies, pre-existing health conditions, social determinants of health (financial, housing, etc.).
	+ **Partner involvement**: Assessing support systems from the partner or family.

**Tools/Resources**:

Perinatal Parent infant relationship support Parental Questionnaire

**2. Follow-up visit**

**Objective:** Goal setting – longterm and shorterm goal to get there.

**Key Activities:**

* **Agree goals** - Break down overarching goal and focus on little steps
* **Psychoeducation** – baby brain development, foetal development pictures, use tape measure to illustrate the size of the baby now measure against the arm of mum. Helps to get mum thinking about baby development and visualise the baby
* **Daily routine**, how will baby fit in with that. Think about babies needs
* **Experience of the baby** - Thinking about the baby’s world in utero.
* **Focus on individual need** – sleep, diet.
* **Strength based and full of hope** - Focus on the good things, always ask what good things had happened.

**Tools/ Resources**

Goal worksheet

Nutrition worksheet

Routine – think about mums’ routine and how her life is going to change when baby comes along. Baby’s patterns and movement - Support to think about when baby is moving.

Mums’ world of support – who she has to support her.

**3. Educational Sessions**

**Objective**: Provide parents with information and support to enhance bonding and attachment with the unborn child.

**Key Activities**:

* + **Pregnancy and childbirth education**: Understanding fetal development and its importance for early bonding.
	+ **Attachment theory**: Introduction to the concept of parent-infant attachment and its role in early emotional development.
	+ **Parenting skills**: Practical guidance on early infant care (e.g., calming techniques, feeding, holding).
	+ **Critical brain**: kind vs aggressor. Talk to critical mind by noticing that having thoughts and body response. Accepting that those thoughts are there and that is ok. Then able to accept feeling compassionate about self. Support to understand and notice compassion. Accepting and giving compassion. Use fist clench exercise. Got own back and giving compassion to self.
	+ **Fist clenching visual -**  ‘having own back’
	+ **Mindfulness and relaxation**: Training on stress reduction and self-care techniques for expectant parents.

**Tools/Resources**:

Hormone changes in pregnancy – feel good hormones, overcoming stress.

Body image

Many hats of parenthood.

Routine – think about mums’ routine and how her life is going to change when baby comes along.

Baby’s patterns and movement - Support to think about when baby is moving.

Mums’ world of support – who she has to support her.

**4. Therapeutic Support**

**Objective**: To address emotional and psychological needs related to pregnancy and build readiness for the parent-infant relationship.

**Key Activities**:

* + **Individual support:**  Addressing any emotional concerns, fears, or trauma related to pregnancy and impending parenthood.
	+ **Support for partners**: For partners who may need support in strengthening their relationship and preparing for shared parenting.
	+ **Compassionate mind**: history of MH. Support to contain. Three circle - Threat, soothing and drive circles. Choose circle sizes for each and helps to visually understand. Talk about what they all are and what they mean. Then relate this to the brain threat and critical thinking brain with intrusive thoughts. Link back to learning around infant brain development.
	+ **Mind-body practices**: Techniques such as yoga or guided imagery to improve emotional regulation and connection to the unborn child.
	+ **Breathing exercises** – learn how to use breath. Deep breath in through nose, hold (ask client how long), breathe out, hold again for a few seconds. Repeat. Asked her what she though about when she was doing it. Breathing is an emotional parachute as it focuses on the breathing, stop thinking about other things – grounding.

**Tools/Resources**:

Looking at life history – what happened to them as a child, how they would like their baby’s life to be.

Thinking about having a new baby in the house, how this is going to change things

**5. Preparation for birth and parenthood**

**Objective**: Prepare parents for the transition to parenthood and the early stages of parent-infant bonding.

**Key Activities**:

* + **Birth plan discussions**: Emotional preparation for labour and delivery, including potential challenges (e.g., unexpected outcomes, caesarean section).
	+ **Expectations of early parenting**: Discussing what to expect in the first days and weeks after birth, including infant sleep, feeding, and emotional cues.
	+ **Developing a support network**: Identifying community resources (e.g., lactation consultants, parenting groups, family support).

**Tools/Resources**:

Thinking about the baby’s name

Thinking about baby equipment – what they need, would like and what is necessary

When will I feel like a real dad/ mum – helping to think about being a parent

Thinking about labour and birth – coping with labour, thinking about comfort methods in last trimester

Birth environment

Becoming a parent, welcoming your baby

**6. Postnatal Follow-up**

**Objective**: Support the ongoing development of the parent-infant relationship after the baby is born.

**Key Activities**:

* + **Postnatal mental health check-in**: Screening for postpartum depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.
	+ **Attachment support**: Guidance on infant attachment behaviours, bonding activities (skin-to-skin contact, breastfeeding, or bottle-feeding).
	+ **Parenting coaching**: Offering support in dealing with infant crying, sleep patterns, and early developmental milestones.
	+ **Family involvement**: Encouraging support from extended family or friends in early childcare responsibilities.

**Tools/Resources**:

**7. Ending the support**

**Objective:** Empower client to express when they feel they are complete with the support.

**Key Activities:**

* **Measure the outcome of the pathway:** Repeat Likert scale, review and record goal success.
	+ **Feedback loop**: Collecting feedback from parents on the intervention process to make improvements and ensure the program is meeting their needs.

**8. Resource List**

* Goal worksheet
* Nutrition worksheet
* Routine – think about mums’ routine and how her life is going to change when baby comes along.
* Baby’s patterns and movement - Support to think about when baby is moving.
* Mums’ world of support – who she has to support her.
* Hormone changes in pregnancy – feel good hormones, overcoming stress.
* When will I feel like a real dad/ mum – helping to think about being a parent
* Many hats of parenthood
* Body image
* Experience that parents have got – explore any previous experience of looking after babies and young children
* Thinking about the baby’s name
* Thinking about baby equipment – what they need, would like and what is necessary
* Looking at life history – what happened to them as a child, how they would like their baby’s life to be.
* Thinking about having a new baby in the house, how this is going to change things
* Thinking about labour and birth – coping with labour, thinking about comfort methods in last trimester
* Birth environment
* Becoming a parent, welcoming your baby
* Thinking about mums’ special qualities and things she may be able to teach her child.
* Baby and me – helps parents to start think about the baby, a list of questions that will help to plan focus of work.