



**Moving to Adoption**

**Secure Base developmental checklist  
0 – 18 months**



# Secure Base developmental checklist

Many children in foster care will have built trust in their foster carers as a secure base from which they can explore, learn and enjoy their world. For some infants, placed from birth, this will have been their only experience of caregiving and their trust will be deeply rooted. For other children, earlier experiences of separation or neglectful or abusive caregiving may cause them to remain anxious and to distrust close relationships or to be vulnerable to further separation.

When children move from foster care to adoption, it is important to note and understand the extent to which they have developed secure base relationships with their foster carers. Information about these relationships and the child's emotional development can feed in to the moving process and support the development of secure base relationships in the adoptive family.

This checklist corresponds with the child's behaviours under five headings that are important elements of children's secure base relationships and emotional development:

- Trust
- Managing feelings
- Self-esteem
- Feeling effective
- Sense of belonging

N.B. There are major changes to children's behaviours within each age range, and answers to some questions will depend on the specific age of the child. There are also differences (observable from birth) in levels of sociability and activity due to differences in temperament. The full range of normal development should, therefore, be taken into account.

**These checklists should be used as a helpful source of information, not as an assessment tool.**

# 0-18 months

## Trust

Does the child:

seek comfort when distressed (e.g. crying and gazing towards the caregiver)

Yes       Sometimes       No

accept comfort when distressed (e.g. settling when picked up and cuddled)

Yes       Sometimes       No

use a caregiver as a secure base for exploration ( i.e. after accepting reassurance or comfort, become able to explore and play)

Yes       Sometimes       No

show some degree of preference for one or more caregiver (e.g. gaze / preferred for cuddles- develops during the first 8 months)

Yes       Sometimes       No

target attachment behaviours at this caregiver/these caregivers (e.g. gaze, verbalisation when upset / happy – approach once mobile)

Yes       Sometimes       No

protest at separation from specific caregivers (range of protest –depending on temperament / attachment pattern)

Yes       Sometimes       No

settle / settle to play at reunion

Yes       Sometimes       No

show interest and pleasure in the environment

Yes       Sometimes       No

enjoy playing jointly / independently with objects / toys

Yes       Sometimes       No

'take turns' with /'converse' with adults – initiating and responding to vocalising, facial movements (can start from soon after birth)

Yes       Sometimes       No

**Recent example of one or more of these behaviours**

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

# 0-18 months

## Managing feelings

Does the child:

show a full range of emotions, both positive and negative (e.g. smile, laugh, frown, rage, cry)

Yes       Sometimes       No

communicate their needs (e.g. for proximity, food, play)

Yes       Sometimes       No

react appropriately to sensory stimuli (e.g. show interest/react to light, sound, smell, touch, taste - but not panic or freeze)

Yes       Sometimes       No

wait for attention / manage emotions – with help (e.g. voice of caregiver indicating food is on the way)

Yes       Sometimes       No

sleep regularly and in a relaxed way (NB Sleep patterns will vary)

Yes       Sometimes       No

seem comfortable in their body (e.g. able to relax and also enjoy being active)

Yes       Sometimes       No

cope with being told 'no' (e.g. protest but then settle fairly quickly)

Yes       Sometimes       No

**Recent example of one or more of these behaviours**

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

# 0-18 months

## Self-esteem

Does the child:

express pleasure at their achievements (e.g. shaking a rattle to make a noise, standing up on their own, building a tower)

Yes       Sometimes       No

show interest and enthusiasm for interactive games like peek-a-boo (e.g. showing pleasure at success)

Yes       Sometimes       No

approach new people /situations positively ( balancing curiosity, caution and pleasurable anticipation)

Yes       Sometimes       No

cope with set-backs (e.g. when the rattle doesn't work, the brick tower falls over)

Yes       Sometimes       No



**Recent example of one or more of these behaviours**

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

# 0-18 months

## Feeling effective

Does the child:

make choices (e.g. between foods, toys)

Yes       Sometimes       No

assert him/herself (e.g. getting attention, feeding at his /her own pace)

Yes       Sometimes       No

seem keen to try new things ( NB some variation in enjoying novelty due to differences in temperament)

Yes       Sometimes       No

show focus and persistence in their play (e.g. sustained activity to complete task)

Yes       Sometimes       No

co-operate with nappy changes, feeding, going to sleep (i.e. relaxing and accepting events with the reassurance of caregivers)

Yes       Sometimes       No

play co-operatively ( e.g. turn taking / accepting support to hold the rattle, press the button to make a sound, can lead to co-operative play even in infancy)

Yes       Sometimes       No

**Recent example of one or more of these behaviours**

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

# 0-18 months

## Sense of belonging

Does the child:

recognise foster family members and extended foster family members

Yes       Sometimes       No

prefer family members and family friends (e.g. more likely to communicate with / accept cuddles from)

Yes       Sometimes       No

seem keen to try new things ( NB some variation in enjoying novelty due to differences in temperament)

Yes       Sometimes       No

enjoy family occasions (e.g. seem to fit in as part of the family - if supported / not overwhelmed)

Yes       Sometimes       No

**Recent example of one or more of these behaviours**

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**





