



Moving to Adoption

**Secure Base developmental checklist
18 months – 4 years**

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.

18 months – 4 years

Trust

Does the child:

seek comfort appropriately when stressed (e.g. signal their needs verbally or physically, rather than shut down on feelings; cling, demand and resist comfort; appear helpless; try to control others)

Yes Sometimes No

accept comfort when stressed/ relax

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

have a preference for / selective attachment to one or more caregiver

Yes Sometimes No

protest at separation from caregivers

Yes Sometimes No

settle to play at reunion after separation

Yes Sometimes No

show interest and pleasure in the environment (enjoy the senses –bright colours, taste, touch)

Yes Sometimes No

enjoy playing independently with toys

Yes Sometimes No

use their mobility and language to explore, to have fun, to approach others, to learn

Yes Sometimes No

Recent example of one or more of these behaviours

Helpful caregiving approach

Any additional social worker comments

18 months – 4 years

Managing feelings

Does the child:

express a range of positive and negative feelings but not be overwhelmed by them (toddlers often swing between moods - but it is the degree that counts)

Yes Sometimes No

name simple feelings

Yes Sometimes No

use language to communicate needs, feelings, ideas and goals openly and accurately (language abilities will vary across this age range)

Yes Sometimes No

ever pretend to feel what they are not feeling – seem false (this can start as young as 18 months)

Yes Sometimes No

understand that others have thoughts, feelings and goals that differ from their own (mainly relevant for older children in this range)

Yes Sometimes No

show empathy for others

Yes Sometimes No

show some understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (moral development)

Yes Sometimes No

Recent example of one or more of these behaviours

Helpful caregiving approach

Any additional social worker comments

18 months – 4 years

Self-esteem

Does the child:

enjoy play and activities

Yes Sometimes No

take pleasure in doing something well

Yes Sometimes No

enjoy praise

Yes Sometimes No

cope with not being successful at a task / not winning sometimes

Yes Sometimes No

cope with being told off without extreme reactions

Yes Sometimes No

Recent example of one or more of these behaviours

Helpful caregiving approach

Any additional social worker comments

18 months – 4 years

Feeling effective

Does the child:

make simple choices

Yes Sometimes No

show persistence in completing tasks

Yes Sometimes No

co-operate and negotiate

Yes Sometimes No

manage increased independence without excessive assertiveness/oppositional behaviour

Yes Sometimes No

enjoy /manage sleeping, eating, toileting appropriate to his/her age

Yes Sometimes No

manage peer group relationships (e.g. prosocial, increasingly co-operative, making and keeping friends)

Yes Sometimes No

Recent example of one or more of these behaviours

Helpful caregiving approach

Any additional social worker comments

18 months – 4 years

Sense of belonging

Does the child:

recognise and show special interest in foster /adoptive family members

Yes Sometimes No

have a sense of belonging to the foster /adoptive family

Yes Sometimes No

enjoy family occasions

Yes Sometimes No

have a sense of connection / belonging to the birth family

Yes Sometimes No

react positively to contact with birth family members

Yes Sometimes No

Recent example of one or more of these behaviours

Helpful caregiving approach

Any additional social worker comments

