



**Moving to Adoption**

**Secure Base developmental checklist  
5 – 10 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.**

## 5-10 years

### 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**

# 5-10 years

## Managing feelings

Does the child:

show a full range of basic feelings appropriately for their age (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger) without being overwhelmed by them

Yes     Sometimes     No

communicate their feelings accurately in ways that can get their needs met

Yes     Sometimes     No

talk about / reflect on their feelings

Yes     Sometimes     No

talk about / reflect on the feelings of other people.

Yes     Sometimes     No

show empathy for other children

Yes     Sometimes     No

show more complex emotions of guilt, shame or remorse – and the wish to make things better

Yes     Sometimes     No

understand and accept the rules at home and at school

Yes     Sometimes     No

have effective strategies for managing their feelings and behaviour?

Yes     Sometimes     No

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

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

# 5-10 years

## Self-esteem

Does the child:

have positive self-esteem – think he/she is good at some things and accept not being good at others

Yes       Sometimes       No

respond positively to praise at home or at school

Yes       Sometimes       No

take a pride in their appearance

Yes       Sometimes       No

feel positive about their school performance

Yes       Sometimes       No

get involved in organised activities or hobbies

Yes       Sometimes       No

gain pleasure and satisfaction from activities

Yes       Sometimes       No

cope with the stresses of competing with others, academically and socially

Yes       Sometimes       No

cope with failure and disappointment

Yes       Sometimes       No

cope with being told off i.e. not despairing, shutting down or becoming aggressive

Yes       Sometimes       No



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

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

## 5-10 years

### Feeling effective

Does the child:

make choices

Yes       Sometimes       No

assert themselves appropriately

Yes       Sometimes       No

feel effective and confident

Yes       Sometimes       No

follow through and complete tasks

Yes       Sometimes       No

look after their things appropriately

Yes       Sometimes       No

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

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**

## 5-10 years

### Sense of belonging

Does the child:

seem comfortable spending time with the foster /adoptive family

Yes       Sometimes       No

seem willing / happy to be involved in family events

Yes       Sometimes       No

see themselves as part of the foster /adoptive family

Yes       Sometimes       No

see themselves as part of /connected to the birth family (appropriate to placement type)

Yes       Sometimes       No

talk about the birth family in a realistic and balanced way?

Yes       Sometimes       No

tell a coherent story of their childhood and family life that makes sense to them and is realistic

Yes       Sometimes       No

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

**Helpful caregiving approach**

**Any additional social worker comments**





