

Striving to be Thriving

In Childhood, Adolescence & Adulthood



Supporting conversations about the development of physical, social, emotional and independent life skills:

An evolving capability tool for Social Workers and Foster Carers

“It’s good to remind ourselves where [children] are up to”

Sefton Foster Carer

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Introduction:

‘Striving to be Thriving’ - An Evolving Capability Framework

‘Striving to be Thriving in Childhood, Adolescence and Adulthood’ is a new evolving capability framework which provides primary care givers of our looked after children opportunities for reflection to consider how they can support children with increasing levels of independence at every stage of their developmental journey. In Sefton, we recognise that planning for independence shouldn’t only start with the formation of a Pathway Plan at 15 years, 9 months and have therefore introduced this tool to support thinking and planning for independence as part of a natural progression throughout a child’s developmental journey. This tool reinforces the vision of Sefton’s Children and Young People’s Plan for all of our children to be, heard, happy, healthy and achieving throughout all stages of their life cycle, from childhood, into adolescence and beyond.

Striving to be Thriving in Childhood, Adolescence & Adulthood

As primary carers, promoting independence is something that we do naturally and progressively as part of a child’s developmental journey however we recognise that some of our children and young people who come in to the care of the local authority may not be functioning at age related expectations in a variety of areas (e.g. physical, educational, social, emotional, communication etc.) for a number of reasons including the impact of trauma, neglect, developmental delay or disability.

The aim of the Evolving Capability Framework is to provide a focus with the introduction of this tool/accompanying supporting guidance and bespoke training to support carers to identify any areas for potential support, not only with regard to independent life skills but holistically considering a child/young person’s physical, social and emotional development. Providing opportunities for increased independence should not be viewed through a narrow lens of a child or young person’s ability to undertake only practical tasks, but their ability to live a happy, healthy and fulfilling adult life.

If areas of support are identified at an earlier stage, it is the intention of the implementation of this framework to engage and mobilise our multi-agency partners to act swiftly to provide support to enable our looked after children to thrive.

This strengths-based model will help carers to consider key developmental milestones for younger children (learning to walk, hold a pencil, toilet trained, identifying speech and language delay, using a knife and fork etc, moving through a progressive, wide ranging set of indicators such as being able to swim, can ride a bike, maintain friendships, can travel to school independently, maintain appropriate personal



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hygiene, starting to take responsibility for their own health needs and so on) as a child journeys through childhood and adolescence.

The framework will require robust monitoring and review mechanisms underpinned and supported by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs)/Supervising Social Workers and the Fostering IRO to ensure that independence is considered incrementally at every point of a child's journey through childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

Additional workstreams are also underway with our contracts department to strengthen our commissioning arrangements with third party providers so we can be assured that our children and young people are receiving comparable standards of support regardless of the type of placement/support offered by individual foster carers or independent providers.

It is anticipated that this framework will become the blue print for a new way in which we can ensure all children who are looked after are receiving comparable levels of support and seeks to embed a new way of broaching independence work in which it becomes a natural progression considered at every stage of the child's developmental stage as opposed to a perceived 'niche' area encompassed by Pathway Planning from 15yrs 9months +.

How this tool should be used –

Foster Carers

Foster carers are encouraged to use this tool as an opportunity to reflect on a child/young person's progress and journey of independence incrementally throughout each stage of child development. An ideal time to complete the tool (observations, thoughts, reflections) would be in preparation for a looked after review so that the content could be discussed within the meeting and any areas of celebration can be documented/ any areas of concern addressed and implemented into the child/young person's care plan to enable swift action to be taken as necessary.

If you are concerned about any aspects of a child's development/social & emotional well being, please ensure the child's social worker is notified without delay. You may also consider alerting the child/young person's health visitor, school health/children in care nurse or GP should you have any concerns that require immediate attention.

How this tool should be used –

Social Workers

Supervising social workers should discuss the tool and any observations/reflections with foster carers during visits/contact and ensure that independence is being promoted routinely throughout a child's developmental journey. Supervising social workers should prompt foster carers to share any information/concerns with relevant multi- agency professionals and the child's social worker if any issues are identified. Supervising social workers should support foster carers to consider/identify opportunities to



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promote independence for children and young people and should signpost for support/training if required. Supervising social workers should start to consider training for foster carers on the Resettlement Passport as a young person in their care approaches their 16th birthday.

The child/young person's social worker should be familiar with the framework and review the completed tool, ensuring these are dated and uploaded on to the child's case file before each looked after review. This document should contain information that can be incorporated into the child/young person's care plan and pre meeting report and therefore discussed at the formal review meeting. The child/young person's social worker should ensure that relevant information is incorporated into the child/young person's annual C&F assessment (or more frequently if there has been a significant change of circumstance) and fed into the updated care plan. If any issues are identified, consideration should be made to making referrals to appropriate agencies. It may also be appropriate to convene an urgent care planning meeting to discuss what support can be offered to prevent delay.

How this tool should be used –

Independent Reviewing Officers

Independent Reviewing Officers are ideally placed to ensure that children and young people's care plans are robust and are meeting their identified needs in a timely manner. IROs are encouraged to reference the 'Striving to be Thriving' tool and make recommendations for its completion via the care planning and review process. We also hope that IROs will value the tool as a mechanism to ensure that progress/strengths can be celebrated and that any areas of concern are being addressed via the social worker and multi-agency partnership. It may also be useful to cross reference the tool with the IHA/RHA to ensure there is a consistency of approach and any issues are being addressed and followed through, particularly from a health perspective.

It is also envisioned that the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer would use the annual review process to ensure that foster carers are aware of/utilising this framework and any support/training needs identified regarding the tool or planning and preparing for independence can be addressed.



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Notes: Reflections/thoughts/observations:



Infant School Age Range (4-7)

When children start to grow, they relish being independent and feeling like a 'grown-up' so it is the perfect time to encourage this as much as possible and praise them for a job well done. Carers can help children to learn responsibility and increase their confidence and self-esteem by teaching them to:

Practical: Make the bed / Put away clean clothes / Match socks / Clear the kitchen table / Wipe up spills / Water plants / Feed pets / Dress themselves / Pack their own school bag/ride a bike/learn to swim/use a knife and fork confidently.

In this age range, children often:

Social & Emotional: Pay attention to friendships and team work / want to be liked and accepted by friends / learn to describe experiences and talk about their thoughts and feelings

Additional consideration may be given to:

Movement milestones: Stands on one foot for ten seconds or longer/Hops/ somersaults/swings and climbs/May be able to skip/Milestones in hand and finger skills/Copies triangle and other geometric patterns/Draws person with body/Dresses and undresses without assistance/Uses fork, spoon, and (sometimes) a table knife/Usually cares for own toilet needs

Language milestones: Recalls part of a story/Speaks sentences of more than five words/Uses future tense/Tells longer stories/Says name and address

Cognitive milestones: Can count ten or more objects/Correctly names at least four colours/

Better understands the concept of time/Knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, appliances)

Social and emotional milestones: Wants to please friends/Wants to be like friends/More likely to agree to rules/Likes to sing, dance, and act/Shows more independence - may spend time at a friends home/ Able to distinguish fantasy from reality/Sometimes demanding, sometimes eagerly cooperative



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Notes: Reflections/thoughts/observations:



Senior School

Age Range (11-16)

Older children need to learn to become self-reliant and confident in their own abilities, so it is important to start letting them carry out tasks by themselves, including supporting them to become more responsible and independent.

Practical: Manage a mobile phone / Travel to/from school independently/ Use public transport/ manage time effectively/ adhere to a curfew/ manage pocket money/maintain personal hygiene/ Increased use of oven and grill for cooking / preparing vegetables, chopping and peeling / follow simple recipes / understand basic food hygiene / take out rubbish / learn how to use washing machine and dryer /iron own clothes/clean bathroom/kitchen

Social and Emotional: Developing ability for complex thought / able to express feelings through talking / developing sense of right and wrong.

Notes: Reflections/thoughts/observations:



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dentist or doctor independently / understanding how to use 111, A&E or a walk-in-centre / asking a pharmacist for simple health advice / developing basic awareness of common over the counter medicines such as paracetamol and antihistamines

Social and Emotional: Showing more independence from care givers / developing deeper capacity for caring and sharing / beginning to have thoughts about future / able to give reasons for own choices.

Notes: Reflections/thoughts/observations:



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The Resettlement Passport

The Resettlement Passport is a tenancy skills course designed to improve the skills and confidence of young people who are looked after and seeks to support them to confidently and successfully manage their own tenancy one day. It is hoped that many of our young people will maintain 'Staying Put' arrangements with their foster carers however this programme will remain beneficial in supporting them to develop key skills they will take with them when they eventually leave home.

The course is made up of 10 units, covering areas key to achieving successful independent living. It is updated each year with new benefit and housing policy changes.

Young and vulnerable people face significant challenges in setting up their own homes and maintaining their tenancies. The course was developed to be a preventative tool with the aim of reducing tenancy breakdowns which are costly to an individual's wellbeing and are also hugely costly financially to housing associations and to society.

As a foster carer, you will be offered training, support and advice in how to support a young person in your care to complete the Resettlement Passport programme. Additional support will also be available from your supervising social worker/young person's personal advisor.

If you would like more advice regarding the Resettlement Passport, please contact your supervising social worker and or young person's social worker for further information.

January 2022.



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