Key questions for the child’s social worker

Methods

Suitable for self–directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

Learning Outcome

Review your understanding of attachment theory and identify actions you can take to support a child.

Time Required

Two sessions of 45 minutes

Process

Thinking of your current approach, answer the following questions.

* What is your understanding of the developmental importance of attachment relationships?

[The Secure Base Model](http://www.uea.ac.uk/providingasecurebase/the-secure-base-model) provides more information on the importance of attachment.

* What is your understanding of the impact of separation on infants, children and young people?
* What steps do you take to achieve quick and decisive action when it is in the child’s best interest to be placed away from home?

See [Brown and Ward (2012)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200471/Decision-making_within_a_child_s_timeframe.pdf) for a review of the evidence on decision-making within a child’s timescale, including a summary of key timeframes for child development on page 46

* What steps do you take to ensure a thorough assessment of the child?
* How to do you ensure that children are placed with a foster carer or adopter who can best meet their individual needs?
* How do you plan placement moves and avoid the need for multiple placements and separations?
* How do you demonstrate to children that you care?
* What support do you provide for contact visits and the emotional challenges that may follow contact?
* What do you do to help you actively seek the views of the child’s foster carer or adopter, and how do you facilitate appropriate support and interventions to address the child’s needs?

Key questions for the supervising social worker

Methods

Suitable for self–directed learning

Learning Outcome

Review current provision and identify actions that can enhance the support provided to foster carers and adopters

Time Required

Three sessions of 45 minutes

Process

1. Read the questions in the following list and assess what actions you take at the moment and what additional support you could provide**.**
2. You may find it useful to focus on three or four questions at a time.
* What actions can you take to ensure that the adults involved in providing alternative care for the child are properly prepared? This includes prepared to take on the care of a maltreated child in general, but also prepared to care for this child in particular –need for accurate information, time with foster carer, good understanding of reasons for decisions etc.
* How do you help foster carers and adopters understand children’s needs for contact when they move placement?
* How do you help foster carers and adopters to understand and respond to children’s behaviour?
* How can you signpost and facilitate access to support and specialist interventions to help foster carers and adopters understand and respond to the child’s behaviour, taking into account the child’s attachment history and their experience of abuse, neglect, separation and loss?
* What actions can you take to encourage and support foster carers (and adopters) to access specialist learning and development opportunities?
* How do you keep in close contact with foster carers and adopters to support them throughout the placement including listening when they talk about their own experiences?
	+ Are there safe places for carers to express negative emotions and ambivalence about the children they care for?
	+ How easy is it for carers to access support in the evenings and at weekends?
* What actions can you take to provide adequate support for contact visits and the emotional challenges that may follow these?
* To what extent do the adoption plans that are agreed by the court locally focus on the child’s needs?
* How can you work with case-holding social workers to share knowledge of research and best practice around contact in long term care?
* How can you work with case holding social workers to ensure that you and the carers you work with have all the necessary information about a child available to ensure that the right kind of care is provided?
* How do you balance the need to work in partnership with foster carers as fellow colleagues alongside your role in protecting the child in placement?
* How do you support adopters to claim children and take responsibility for them whilst still focussing on the child’s needs and vulnerabilities during the early stages of placement?
* How do you ensure that you observe and listen to children’s non-verbal communication when they move placements?

**Key questions for foster carers and adoptive parents**

**Methods**

Suitable for a small group discussion.

**Learning Outcome**

To identify a range of actions that can support a child to develop healthy attachments.

**Time Required**

45 minutes discussion and 15 minutes feedback

**Process**

Ask the group to discuss the following questions and appoint a person who can feedback their ideas.

* Why are the links between a child’s behaviour, emotions, development and their attachment relationships important?
* How can we understand a child's intense feelings towards their attachment figures even when they have been abused or neglected?
* How can we try to make sense of a child’s wishes and feelings feels and find ways of responding to this?
* What methods (e.g. photographs, toys, play and discussion) can we use to help a child remember the people who are or were important?
* How can we give a child a consistent daily routine to provide security and predictability?
* How can you find and undertake specialist learning and development opportunities?
* How can you manage contact visits and the separation once the contact visit is over?

**Additional resources**

For more information on therapeutic parenting see:

[Therapeutic Parenting Handbook](http://www.adoptiontoolbox.com/files/ATTACh_Therapeutic_Parenting_Handbook.pdf)

First Steps in Parenting the Child Who Hurts

Contact in Permanent Placement BAAF

The Child’s Journey Through Placement BAAF

**The impact of early life attachment on child development. Exercise for social workers**

Methods

Suitable for a small group discussion in a team meeting or as part of a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Toby.

Learning Outcome

To identify the impact of early life attachment and assess the support that may be required to enable Toby to form secure attachments.

Time Required

30 minutes for discussion plus 15 minutes for feedback

Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Toby and ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Ask the group to read the case study and answer the following questions.

1. What is the likely impact of Toby's early life on his attachment?
2. How might he behave when placed with his adopters?
3. What information and support will the adopters need for them to help Toby overcome any difficulties?
4. What contact will Toby need with his foster carers and birth family?

The impact of early life attachment on development. Exercise for adopters

Methods

Suitable for a small group discussion during a team meeting or as part of a workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Toby.

Learning Outcome

To identify the impact of early life attachment and assess the support that may be required to enable Toby to form secure attachments.

Time Required

30 minutes plus 15 minutes for discussion

Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Toby. Ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Ask the group to read the case study for Toby and answer the following questions.

1. What is the likely impact of Toby's early life on his attachment?
2. How might he behave when placed with his adopters?
3. How could an adopter help Toby form a secure attachment?