



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## Reflective Tool

### Partners

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STIRLING



# QUICK START GUIDE

You have downloaded the *Reflective Tool* for printing and handwriting. You should read the *Reflective Tool Guidance* before you use this resource for the first time. This is downloadable as a separate document at [www.foodforthoughtproject.info/resources](http://www.foodforthoughtproject.info/resources).

This Tool is intended to stimulate your own thinking but it may also be useful as a reminder for supervision or peer support discussions. You might want to use the *Reflective Tool* during these meetings or add to it following your discussions.

## Let's get started!

First, some basic details so that you can keep a track on who are you thinking about when completing this *Reflective Tool*. Remember, this tool is intended to be used with one child in mind.

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**Date I started** using this Tool to reflect about this child:

**Date I completed** this Tool:

<b>Name of the child/young person you are reflecting on?</b> (You may prefer to pick a pen name that you will remember)	
<b>How long have you known the child?</b>	
<b>How well would you say you know the child?</b>	<b>(Tick box)</b>
a. I don't know them at all yet	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I know them a little	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I know them well	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>What age is the child?</b></p> <p>years</p>
<p><b>How many placements has the child already had?</b></p>
<p><b>What do you know about these?</b></p>

**That's it for this part!**

You will now be asked for your reflections on four topics relating to food practices and the child you've been thinking about above. We will refer to the child as '**your child**' in the questions below.

# TOPIC 1: BEFORE THE CHILD CAME TO ME

This section is all about preparing for a child coming to live with you. You may know quite a lot about them before they come or you may know very little.

If you are not expecting a new child, you may like to use this section to think about a child who is already with you. How did the preparations you made and the information you were given help you and the child to settle in and get to know one another?

## **1. What were you told about your child's food preferences and habits?**

(e.g. what did he/she like to eat? How did he/she like to eat it? Was there anything that he/she didn't like? What were familiar foods for him/her?)

## **2. What were you told about the routines around food that your child has had in the past?**

(You might want to think about things like was your child used to sitting at the table? Did he/she have regular meals? Who prepared food for him/her in the past?)

**3. What were you told about how food was used with your child in the past?**

(e.g. was food used as a reward or punishment? Was food withheld? Was food used to keep him/her quiet?)

**4. Were you aware of any difficulties that your child had around food? If yes, what were they? What did you think was the cause of these difficulties?****5. Did the information you were given help you to understand your child's previous routines and preferences in relation to food and mealtimes?**

Yes  No  (Tick box)

**6. What do you think would have been helpful to know more about?****7. Thinking about food and routines, how did you prepare for your child coming to you?**

(e.g. what were your expectations and concerns around food and routines? Your feelings?)

## TOPIC 2: MYSELF AS A CARER

This section explores issues around your feelings, values and preferences in relation to food and your established food routines.

**1. What are the routines around food in your house/residential unit?**

**2. How are the routines you described above helping with the care you are providing to your child?**

**3. In what ways might these routines be getting in the way of your experience of caring for your child?**

**4. What would your child say about your routines?**

**5. Do you or your residential unit have any particular rules around food? If yes, how were they chosen and who chose them?**

(e.g. children must sit at the table)

**6. Are there any things about how your child eats or uses food that you find particularly difficult?**

(This could be things like not sitting at the table, not liking the food you give to him/her, being messy, not sticking to your rules)

**7. Are there any things about how you or your family/colleagues eat or use food that your child finds difficult?**

(This could be things like eating round the table, not wanting him/her to eat particular foods)

**8. When difficulties happen around food, how do you feel? And what do you do?**

(You may have a range of feelings)

**9. Thinking about your own favourite foods, what makes them favourites?****10. In what ways, if at all, have your favourite foods and routines been changed since your child has been with you? How do you feel about this?****11. What are your three most important expectations around food?**

(e.g. you might have expectations like children should eat with cutlery, sit at the table, ask for treats, help with chores, wash their hands, not have food in their bedroom, not eat sweets and so on)

1.

2.

3.

# TOPIC 3: POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF FOOD BEHAVIOURS

You're half way there! Already you are building up a very detailed picture of you and your child.

This next section explores the ways in which food and the things that you and your child do with, and around food, are a good experience for you both.

**1. What does your child most enjoy eating? Describe the circumstances around this.**

(You might want to think about what type of food your child enjoys, who else is present, who buys the food, who prepares it and so on)

**2. Why do you think the food you describe above is a favourite of your child?**

**3. What is your child doing well in relation to food?**

(You could think about eating, sitting at the table, choosing, menu planning, shopping, chores and so on)

**4. How is food used to show you care in your house/residential unit?**

**5. How does your child show that they care about themselves and others through food?**

**6. Are there any other positive feelings that you or your child communicates through food?**

(These might relate to 'togetherness', joy, celebration, self-esteem and so on)

**7. Do you think your child always knows what you are trying to communicate through food?**

# TOPIC 4: CHALLENGES FACED BY FOOD BEHAVIOURS

This final section explores the challenges that you and your child face around food and explores a little of why this might be.

**1. If someone were a fly on the wall in your house/residential unit, what would they notice about how your child is around food?**

**2. What worries do you have about your child in relation to food?**

**3. Does your child use food to express any negative feelings?**

(These might include anger, fear, loneliness, sadness or rejection for example)

**4. What have you noticed about your child at mealtimes? Are there variations depending on whether it's breakfast, lunch, tea, dinner or supper? What might he/she be feeling?**

**5. What experiences, if any, do you think your child has missed out on in relation to food?**

(You might think about predictable mealtimes, soothing food experiences as a baby, being fed and held as a baby, being helped to eat as a toddler, experiencing a range of flavours and textures, eating with others or outside the home)

**6. Do any of the issues you noted about your child's challenging behaviours impact on other people in your house/residential unit? In what ways?**

(e.g. does the behavior distress other children?)

**7. If you could change three things about how your child is around food, what would they be and why?**

1.

2.

3.

This is the end of the reflective part of the tool. The next section should help you to begin to pull some of your reflections together. Once you have done that you can decide whether there are any issues, feelings or thoughts that you want to talk over with your child or with your colleagues or supervisor. Hopefully, the tool will have helped you to identify the positive ways in which you and your child are using food. You might want to think about how you can build on these or consider ways of sharing these positive experiences and insights with your child, supervisor, team or peer support group.

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT OR TAKE TO SUPERVISION OR PEER SUPPORT

Now that you have completed the *Reflective Tool*, think about the following questions. These might be useful to take to a peer support group discussion or to talk over with your support worker or supervisor.

**1. Is there anything about you or your child that surprised you?**

**2. What have you noticed about yourself or your views?**

**3. What ideas do you have about why your child has difficulties around food?**

**4. What messages do you think your child is trying to give you through food?**

**5. How might food help your child recover from past hurts?**

(You might want to think about recovering from missed opportunities, building relationships of trust, feeling listened to, developing ability to make choices, being kept safe)

**More notes:**

# ABOUT FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This resource was written by Ruth Emond, Carol George, Ian McIntosh and Samantha Punch (School of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling) and was devised in collaboration with our partners: FCA Scotland, Aberlour Child Care Trust, Perth and Kinross Council, the Centre for Excellence in Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS). The *Food For Thought* project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.



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## STAYING INVOLVED

The *Food for Thought* team are committed to monitoring the impact of this resource on practice. Over the next five years, the team will be seeking views on how useful this resource is to foster carers, residential staff and managers as well as how they think it has impacted on children's everyday lives. We would be delighted to hear about your experiences of using this resource.

You can do this by sending a comment through the *Food for Thought* website [www.foodforthoughtproject.info](http://www.foodforthoughtproject.info) or by contacting one of the team (Ruth Emond) on [h.r.emond@stir.ac.uk](mailto:h.r.emond@stir.ac.uk). You can ring Ruth on 01786 467710.

