



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reflective Tool: Guidance

Partners



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING



WHAT IS THIS TOOL FOR?

This *Reflective Tool* is one of a number of resources that have been developed to help build on your awareness of the role food plays in your care of children and young people and in looking after yourself.

The Tool is intended to get you thinking!

Different meanings are associated with food and the routines and practices that surround it. We are often told about the importance of nutrition and the value of shared mealtimes but less is said about the ways in which we communicate through food or what food can stand for in terms of thoughts, beliefs and feelings.

WHEN SHOULD I USE IT?

Ideally, the Tool is intended to be used after you have taken part in one of the *Reflective Workshops*, which may have been run by your organisation or in your area. Ask your manager or support worker if you haven't attended one of these Workshops.

The Workshops provide an opportunity to explore, with colleagues or other carers, how food and the routines and practices associated with it can be used to support looked after children and young people. Going along to one should start you thinking about how you might be using food to communicate or to manage feelings.

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BACKGROUND

The *Reflective Tool* was developed as part of the *Food for Thought* Project. This project turned research findings from a study about food practices in residential children's homes (*Food and Care Study* or *FaCS*) into resources that are aimed at helping the carers of looked after children. The resources include the *Food for Thought Reflective Workshops*, an online *Interactive Introduction*, this *Reflective Tool* and the *JOTIT Notebook* as well as *Peer Support Guidance* aimed at helping groups of staff or foster carers to learn from each other by discussing food and care in one of their regular meetings. These resources were developed by a group made up of academics, foster carers, residential workers and managers.

WHO IS IT FOR?

This *Reflective Tool* has been designed primarily for use by residential workers, foster carers and early adopters. However, it can be used by anyone who is involved in the care of children and young people or who work closely with them. The Tool can be used by an individual carer or it can be used by a team of staff. It has been designed to be completed in writing but you might choose to use the questions to shape discussion in supervision or in team meetings.

Although the *Reflective Tool* has been developed with particular situations in mind, anyone who would like to think more about the role that food has in the care of children and young people can use it.

For example, it might be useful for parents, for potential parents or for young people who would like to think about how food and associated practices impact on the care they receive and give.



WHY SHOULD I USE IT?

The *Reflective Tool* encourages personal reflection on the experiences adults and children are having in relation to food. It aims to support adults to think about what might be being communicated through food. Food, in this context, is more than just nutrition. Instead it is thought about as representing a range of social and emotional elements. The Tool should help you in your thinking about what might be behind the actions around food or how you might want to use food to help you communicate with your child.

This *Reflective Tool* is for your personal use at home or in work. It prompts you with questions and reflection points to think about how food is 'done'. It encourages you to think, for example, about how your child may have experienced food before coming to live with you, why they might accept or reject food. It aims to support your reflections on how your own values and experiences as well as the regulations and systems that you have to work within, impact on the experience your child has of being cared for.

HOW DO I USE THIS REFLECTIVE TOOL?

There are no right or wrong answers to the questions in the *Reflective Tool*. They are there simply to help you to think about and record your reflections so that you remember them during your subsequent discussions. It will also be helpful to revisit what you have thought from time to time so that you can see how things change.

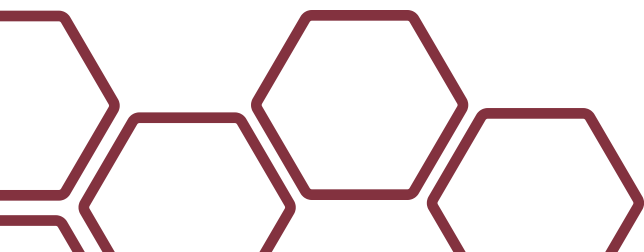
The Tool is divided into sections. At each section you will be asked to think about the questions and either type or write something in the space provided (depending on whether you have chosen to use the electronic version or a paper copy). The way you answer the questions is up to you. Type or write as much or as little as is helpful. This is YOUR tool.

Try to find a quiet time in your day so that you can spend some time completing the *Reflective Tool* without too many interruptions. If you are filling it in on the computer remember to save your work regularly.

WHO WILL SEE WHAT I WRITE?

No one – unless you choose to show it to someone!

The *Reflective Tool* is downloaded as a blank form from the *Food for Thought* website and either printed or saved to your own computer. Download the PDF version if you prefer to print it and write on it, or the computer enabled version if you prefer to fill it in on screen. You are always in charge of who sees what you write down. Nothing you type will be saved unless you decide to save your work on your own computer. Your written reflections are for you to file or destroy as you please.



WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED SUPPORT AFTER I HAVE USED THE TOOL?

The *Reflective Tool* has been designed to help you think at a deeper level about the day-to-day use of food. You might want to talk to someone about what you've discovered from completing this tool. You might also be left with strong feelings or questions. You could take the completed tool to your next supervision to support your discussion of the issues that you identify from using this Tool.

Alternatively you might want to take your print-out or hand written document to a peer support session. Ask your supervisor or manager if there is a group running in your area.

We hope that you enjoy using the Reflective Tool and that you find it helpful.

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.

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



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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