

ALL ABOUT ME

MY COMPANION GUIDE FOR USE WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

'We are what we were, once we understand this, we have the opportunity to aspire to all we want to be' Rose (2017)

Welcome

This companion guide has been developed for carers and support workers so as to support children and young people to complete the All About Me booklets.

Essentially, the All About Me is a tool to help you as a carer/support worker/social worker to record a 6-monthly snapshot of your child/young person's life, interest, achievements and thoughts. As the years go by, we are hopeful that a 6-monthly collection of these snapshots will mean that a young person could complete 10 of these recordings over a 5-year period and therefore a 200-page document capturing their development, their interests and their life journey. This will provide an insight of the child/young person for those they wish to share their journey with, as well as affirmation of living those years whilst receiving services and support from the Department of Human Services. The All About Me book invites conversations with children and young people, and to help them to keep information together about their life journey. This also promotes a sharing of life's and stories with you as the adult and so build in potential attachment, emotional connection and attunement.

Children and young people will gain a sense of their identity when they understand their history and background, including events and details about their parents' background and circumstances. The All About Me assists you to have conversations with the child or young person about their current circumstances and how they see themselves, their carers and the world. In doing so, this reflection will help them connect to the past, and importantly, help them think about and plan for their future.

This guide will help you use the All About Me in a way that is meaningful for the child/young person. Remember, the process is the child or young person's resource. It's their story.

Your role, whether as a practitioner or as a carer is to help the child collect memories, stories, and information, and to help remember the details that can be lost over time. The resource provides a structure for collecting and storing the information.

Professor Richard Rose

UK 2020

Why engage in any activity that supports an understanding of a life journey?

When children and young people are subject to intervention from social services, it can be a confusing and anxious time. As decisions are made around the child/young person, the impact of these decisions will undoubtedly impact on the child. It is important for those involved in their life to help them keep records of their life's journey. Life story work can be in any form that suits the child or young person. It is their personal record of their history; their life from before they were born, their birth, their present and the opportunity to look to the future. It can include anything that helps them understand why they are receiving support and in turn, the books will support them to understand their current circumstances.

For many children and young people, life story work helps their healing journey by understanding the present, reflecting on the past and for preparing them to move on to a positive future. I believe that children and young people need to be supported to learn about their culture – their family's ethnicity, religions/s and language/s – in this way, they will have better opportunities to stay connected with their family, culture and community. In time, this can contribute to positively shaping their self-identity and self-esteem.

Focusing on the journey of the child/young person's life story through a series of All About Me provides an opportunity for you to have conversations with your child or young person and other significant people who have been or are related to the child or young person's life, including their family, social, education and health

connections. Through these conversations, you may assist the development of positive sense of self, of their identity, belonging and those around them that seek to support them.

The value of All About Me

- Gives details and understanding of a child or young person's current view.
- Enables conversations with the child or young person to share realistic information about their past, current and future.
- Links the past to the present.
- Helps the child or young person connect and understand how early negative experience may continue to affect them.
- Acknowledges separations and losses, and the impact of their past.
- Builds a sense of connection with family or community who may have been lost.
- Builds a sense of identity.
- Enhances self-esteem and self-worth.
- Enables the child or young person to develop a sense of security.
- Helps build relationships.
- Celebrating the child or young person's life.

Key pointers to guide you in the completion of the All About Me process

- Promote positive messages and comments about culture.
- Be curious and facilitate a child or young person's interests, noting that culture may not always be at the forefront of their daily experiences, and over time interest may come and go.
- Give permission to the child or young person to talk about different aspects of their life.
- Revisit the questions and answers periodically as children and young people can change their mind over time.
- Keep the opportunity for conversation ongoing, and capture information for the child or young person when and as they need it.
- Ask the child or young person what they would like to talk about next time.
- Collect information as you talk with the child or young person's birth family or other significant people.
- Track records about the child or young person's milestones and revisit progress, adding narratives and stories you talk about.
- The All About Me will provide a strong, continuous flow as the child completes the task every 6 months, as they do this, you as the carer/support worker will weave connections between the child or young person's present and past and into the future.

Your guide to using All About Me

All children and young people are unique and so there is not one way to use the All About Me process, as none will be the same. This guide covers key elements that are relevant to all children and young people, and allows for additional information to be added that is unique to the individual's story.

Consider the child or young person's development, age and interests in the approach you take initially to start the conversation. On an ongoing basis, be guided by the child or young person on what they want to focus on.

The key thing to remember is that you are getting to know the individual, and you are helping them to collate information about their life. As a general guide, it may be easier for the child or young person to talk about **the present**.

Be curious and ask questions...

- What do you like to do? What are your interests?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Who is important on your life?
- What do you like about your home now?
- What makes you feel happy or sad; frustrated or angry?

All About Me is designed to move from and between sections. There are additional pages at the back of the book that can be used as and when needed.

Suggested Key Sections

The suggested key sections or elements, in no order at present, but include sections such as: -

This is Me

A reference to information that is relevant for the time that you are collecting. It can be completed repeatedly as often as is of interest to the child or young person, and dated accordingly.

Refer to the back section for new sheets or create new sheets as needed.

This section is an opportunity to talk about the present and record favourite things for that particular time. It includes a range of prompts such as:

- My favourite food
- Favourite music or song
- Favourite band or singer
- Favourite sport, game or toy
- Favourite colours
- Favourite animal/s
- Favourite book/s
- Favourite movie/s

- Favourite TV show or online program
- Favourite place
- Names of best friends
- One thing I like to do generally or on the weekend

Remember, the book collects information about the child or young person's life and is **importantly a celebration of their life**. Use all or some prompts, and add others that are of interest for the child.

There is room to list the **things the child likes** about themselves and the **things they are good at**.

Additionally, there is room for the child or young person to draw pictures of themselves or to add photos or images of how they see themselves.

This is My family

This section provides an opportunity to include details of the individual's parents, extended family members, siblings and other significant individuals.

Where possible, ask the child or young person's family members to provide information and pictures.

The child or young person may like to **draw a picture of the family member if photos** are not available. You may help them look into what the meaning of their family member's name may be as part of the life story work.

A **family tree diagram** can be included in the All About Me, and also a **those that are important to me diagram** so as to celebrate and understand how the child/young person sees themselves in the family and community. It maybe that a traditional tree is not helpful, so be creative and be involved,

Other information that may be of interest to include could be:

- What were the child or young person's parent's interests?
- Where did their parents and/or family grow up?
- Which school did their parents attend?
- What are the birth dates or death dates of significant family members?
- Where have the family gone for holidays?
- Who are the family's special friends?
- Do the family have pets?

Culture and Identity – Who am I?

It is important to provide an opportunity to add information about the individual's family backgrounds, including details about their parents and extended family's place of birth, traditions, rituals, faith practices, customs and language/s.

Consider the following questions to help you understand the individual's family's cultural influences, language(s), religion, and their involvement in community, cultural and religious activities.

- What language(s) is spoken at home?
- What culture and/or religion does the family identify with?
- How does the family practise their culture and/or religion?
- What cultural or religious activities is the family involved in?
- Does the family have contact with members of their cultural community? Do they

want the child or young person to learn about their birth culture?

If so, is there information on:

- The cultural activities they like to be involved in?
- Whether the child or young person has contact with people from their cultural community?
- Whether they want to maintain or learn their first language?
- Whether they want to practise their religion?
- Whether the child or young person has a religiously prescribed diet?

All about my mother allows for narrative about the individual's mother's heritage, her identity, where she was born or her family was born, as well as information about the language she may speak and her faith.

All about my maternal family provides an opportunity to add as much detail as possible about the maternal side of the family. You may add stories, photos and drawings.

All about my father allows for narrative about the individual's father's heritage, his identity, where he was born or his family was born, as well as information about the language he may speak and his faith.

All about my paternal family provides an opportunity to add as much detail as possible about the paternal side of the family. You may add stories, photos and drawings.

All about my brothers and sisters allows for narrative about the individual's siblings. The information is best added whether the siblings are living together or not. You may include ages, parents' names (if different), their likes and dislikes, and activities the child or young person enjoys doing with them.

All about me allows for narrative about what the child or young person knows about their heritage and identity, and what they know about their place of origin, languages their family have used and/or faith they have practised.

The below might help when completing this section:

- For **newborn children to toddlers** - How often does the child hear stories and/or songs and/or listens to cultural music and/or attends cultural gatherings or ceremonies?
- For **children three years onwards** - consider whether the child participates and practises cultural activities and/or takes part in ceremonies related to, faith, and/or, festivals and events, such as art, craft and/or be exposed to culturally related, dress or listen to culturally specific music, dance, and/or eat cultural food.

- For **young people about 13 years and older** consider whether the young person takes part in festivals and events, art, craft activities or dresses, listens to cultural music and how they talk about their culture.

This is the history of my family's country provides an opportunity to talk about the history of the child/young person's country of origin. If you are not abreast of details, do some research, find information and/or talk to a bilingual caseworker, or find community leaders or ethnic services who may have relevant information.

Traditional food allows for a conversation on what foods are common to the child or young person's family, what may be cooked on special events or on particular days, or were common to the family.

Special events provide for more information about the special events the child may attend or participate in and/or celebrate.

People in my community enables a record about significant people in the community who the individual may approach and or talk to about their culture. They may include leaders in the community, including through a faith institution or school.

My feelings

Emotional intelligence and the ability to realise emotions as an important part of who we are, this section should provide an overview of feelings to help the child or young person use words to connect to their emotions. There are opportunities to encourage

the individual to express different feelings and what may trigger these feelings.

There are pages allocated for:

I am happy when...

I am sad when...

I am angry when...

I am excited when...

I am scared when...

My home

This section should provide an opportunity to record details of the child or young person's placement with the people who have care of them. Talk with the child/young person about their experiences of living where they do, and if applicable, memories of the places that they used to live. Photographs are helpful in this section.

My school/nursery/college days

Remember to capture and reflect on the names of those involved in the education of your child/young person as well as an opportunity to secure those memories of child care/preschool, primary school and senior school years. The prompt questions relate to memories, things the child or young person liked, their friends' names, memories of favourite things including how they remember themselves at that stage, and the

things they were good at during that stage. You may like to start off with the present school year, but can go back afterwards to think about previous years with the child or young person if they would like to.

My future

This section encourages the child to record what they may be thinking about with regard to their future including what they would like to be and wishes for their future.

Things I may need to know when I'm older

The All About Me provides an opportunity to save special memories, records, certificates, reports etc of things that the individual may be interested in or need when they are older. It might be helpful to add plastic sleeves to the folder to hold the memorabilia.

Duplicate pages of specific sections such as **This is Me** are added to the back of the book to allow for multiple entries. Alternatively, you may use blank A4 paper and slot these in to the folder provided.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is All About Me and what do I do with it?

This book has been given to your child or young person to collect their memories, stories, and all sorts of information about their life. It's like a journal that will help them remember those details about their life growing up, like their birth family, their culture/s, their hobbies, their school days and their friends.

You can help them write and draw in it, and include photos and collages – whatever they like. Talk with them about how they want to use the book, and how they want you to help them use it. It's their personal book which they can choose to keep private or show people they choose. Remember they don't have to show it to anyone if they don't want to. We are hopeful that each child/young person will complete a book every 6 months to collate a journey throughout their connection with the Department.

2. How do I use their book?

This depends on the child or young person's development and views.

The book is a tool to help keep information together about their life, that they may want to refer to as they are living in situations that require support from the

Department, or when they are an adult, and want to reflect on their history. But if they don't want to use the book, it's OK not to push them. Talk to them about how they want to keep their memories or offer some other alternatives such as a treasure box or a scrapbook or photo/video library.

If the child doesn't want to use the book, talk with them about whether you may use it to store some information about them as they are growing up, so they can look at it at a later stage. It is important that you do this so as to capture the experience, achievements, interests, hopes and aspirations.

3. Where do I keep the All About Me?

Talk with the child or young person about where they want to keep the book. It's their book and it's important to keep it in a safe place that it will be cared for. Keeping a soft copy of the All About Me book in case it is lost, destroyed or unreadable is highly recommended.

4. When do I write in the All About Me?

It's important to have a conversation with the individual and revisit the conversation as needed. If the child is younger and unable to express their views, you might want to add information to it to help keep their history together.

The important thing is to keep adding information to it over time so that it has the information as and when the individual asks for it.

You might want to add such information as a copy of the child or young person's birth certificate, records from their blue health book/developmental monitoring, or school reports or awards and/or certificates. It may be helpful to add photos of special events with family members, photos celebrating cultural or other significant.

5. Why is it important to learn about culture?

Part of understanding one's identity and helping shape a sense of belonging may be to learn about and understanding one's family's cultural heritage, history and family traditions.

This information helps children grow up strong and proud, knowing their parent's/s' history and circumstances, and how they connect to communities. **All About Me** is a way of keeping connected to family, community and culture and will help the child or young person develop their sense of culture and/or spirituality. It is important to provide opportunities to develop and maintain a sense of belonging to their culture/s, language/s and faith. You may be able to assist the individual with information and experiences about their cultural heritage through special events, activities like cooking and music, and participating in community traditions.