

All About Me Policy

Stage 1 of the Life Story Process for Children's Social Care

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1. All About Me Books (AAM)

All children receiving a service from BFC Children's Social Care (CSC) will be encouraged to complete, or will have completed on their behalf, a 20 page (or equivalent alternative media based record) AAM. In developing AAM, the child/young person will be able to express their present life experiences, their understanding of past events and their hopes and aspirations for the future. Making an AAM should result in the celebrating of the child/young person in the now, using art, drama, play and importantly having fun. The process should encourage children and young people to explore their today and record this for their tomorrow.

Professionals involved with the AAM will see the child/young person through the lens of the author and so have an insight in the world they occupy. This should be more than creating a series of events, as it is envisaged that children and young people, their care givers and the professionals around them will draw closer as they share lives and share stories. It is

expected that these AAM books are repeated every 6 months, which could be in line with statutory reviews and/or planning meetings. It will provide a first-person view of the child/young person's life in words and pictures, drama and creative arts so as to explore emotions and behaviour through play, conversation and counselling.

“Play is our first language and can be said to be the natural language of children. By using the safety of play with toys, puppets, symbolic and representational play, as well as creative and expressive arts we can gain insights into the child’s inner world.” *Janet West, 1996*

AAM should: -

- Keep as full a record as possible of a child/young person's life journey through the 'In Need/Care/Permanency
- Integrate the past into the present so that current behaviour and emotions can make sense
- Provide a basis to which all children/young people can be heard
- Be something the child can return to when they need clarification or reassurance;
- Increase a child's sense of self and self-worth;
- Provide a structure for talking to children about what may be difficult issues.

2. Preparing the AAM

The process should be initiated, driven and coordinated by the child's social worker and carried out in coordination with the child, the carer(s), parents, relatives, friends etc.

Time and care should be given to:

- Planning carefully how to undertake the work
- Understanding the history and current issues for the child/young person
- Collating the current story of the child and how they see their internal and external world
- Sharing reasons and encouraging a child/young person to express views on key decisions so as to ensure advocacy
- Supporting children, parents, friends, relatives and carers to see the importance of the past, how it affects the present and that the future is an opportunity

3. Materials

Presentation is very important in terms of validating the importance of the AAM and motivating the child/young person to want to author and engage with this: - Some suggestions. It is important to keep a copy of all materials and a copy of the final AAM to be placed on the child/young person's personal file to protect for the future.

4. Recommendation for Contents

What is my Identity

- My Name is....
- Who am I?
- Where was I born?
- What has happened to me before I came to live here?

Who is in my life?

- My Parents are....
- My Carers are....
- My Family are....
- My Best Friends are....
- My Social Worker is....
- The people who I see and who are important to me

Where am I?

- I have lived at....
- I live at....
- I went to these schools....
- I am atSchool
- I sometimes go

Why am I where I am?

- I am in Care because....
- I have a social worker because....

My feelings

- I love to....
- I don't like....
- I hate....
- I worry about....
- I am scared of....
- When I need to be safe I
- I am not happy when/if....
- My other feelings include....
- I like it when....

A few of my favourite things

- My favourite toy/game is....
- My favourite tv/film is....
- My favourite colour is....
- My favourite food is....
- My favourite sweets is....
- Other things I enjoy....

Over the next 6 months I

- I would like to....
- I hope to....
- I will try not to...
- I aim to....
- At my next review/meeting, I would like people to decide/talk about...

5. Families, Connected and Foster Carers / Residential Staff

Family's, Connected Cares, Foster families, Adoption and Residential staff should be encouraged to record the story of the child's stay with them as fully as possible, including:

- Descriptions of what the child was like when they arrived, what they liked and disliked
- Details of achievements
- Their own special memories of the child;
- Birthdays, Christmases (other cultural and religious celebrations) and other family celebrations/outings/holidays etc. - photos, favourite places etc;
- Souvenirs of school - photos, certificates, reports, photos of and stories from teachers;
- Contact visits;
- Illnesses;
- Photos of birth family with foster family;
- Crafts/pictures completed in the home/school/playgroup;

- Anecdotes (may be recordings as well as text).

6. Using the AAM

Children need truthful and honest explanations that they can understand. This means using familiar and uncomplicated language.

It is important that:

- Questions are answered as honestly as possible;
- Adults acknowledge when they do not know the answer and commit to try and find out (rather than making something up);
- Children are helped to accept that not everything can be explained or understood;
- Information is given sensitively and honestly. Protection and evasion can lead to confusion and anxiety;
- Adults help children realise which feelings are healthy and acceptable by discussing their own feelings frankly. If feelings are ignored, children can get the message that to express them is wrong. Bottling them up can lead to challenging behaviour, such as aggression or withdrawal;
- Adults are honest about abusive/bad relationships and their impact on individuals and family life.

Moving to Stage 2

Stage 2 is available if it is assessed that the child/young person is in need of a fuller, more therapeutic explanation of the reasons for their care status or traumatic events in their lives. The approach is referred to as a 'More about Me' book (MAM) and typically takes 8 to 12 sessions. More details and the assessment process can be found in the MAM (Stage 2) policy

Moving to Stage 3

Stage 3 is available if it assessed that the child/young person is in need of completing a therapeutic life story work intervention. This process is typically used for children and young people who are affected by early life trauma and find themselves challenged in living in the 'now'.

The approach is referred to as a 'TLSW' intervention and typically takes 12 – 18 sessions. More details and the assessment process can be found in the TLSW (Stage 3) policy