



# Life Journey Work Activities Guide

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## **1. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING CHILDREN MOVING TO ADOPTION**

### **MEMORY BOX**

Should be started when the child arrives in to foster care. It will help the child with their identity and also collate a meaningful record of their life history. The Memory Box should be completed by the time the child leaves placement so that they can take it with them.

Resources: Memory box checklist

### **NARRATIVE STORY**

This is a simple factual story of the child's life thus far and should explain why the child was removed from their birth family, what decisions have been made as a result of this and who made them. The story must be written in age appropriate language and encompassed by a page border. It should be given a lot of credence and treated with respect, as it is representative of the child's life. The child should be allowed to share their story so that they can show it to important people in their life so that they too can understand the child's story and plan for the future. These should remain available at all times for the child to be able to refer to as and when they need to. This story can be used with birth siblings also to give them the same understanding of what is happening.

Resources: Templates can be provided to make the books which should be personalised for each child

### **FACILITATING EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS**

Help child identify and verbalise/show feelings evoked

Resources Needed:

**FEELING CARDS:** Help to put words to feelings

**FEELING FACES:** Pictures made with the child depicting a variety of facial expressions and emotions that may be useful to a child who has difficulty in verbalising their feelings. The main emotions are happy, sad, angry, scared, worried and confused. Having pictures of the faces available to them may help them be able to

show rather than have to say what it is they may be feeling. The faces could be drawn on paper plates or placed on the front of plastic cups with a jar of beads available for the child to pour into the cup or onto the plate to show the feeling they are experiencing. FEELINGS PINWHEEL: Make a feelings pinwheel with the child for them to show what feelings look like rather than having to find words.

Read books which help children to identify and express their feelings such as How Are you Feeling Today? Maybe Days. Build time to talk about feelings into your daily routine.

### IDENTIFYING CHILDRENS NEEDS

Give the child an understanding of the basic needs of children and how they should be met.

Resources needed: Blocks or sponges with the needs of children written on the side of them so that they may be used to build a wall of strength. Love warmth clothes food etc. It can be used to demonstrate how when certain pieces are missing the wall can become weak and maybe even collapse

### ESTABLISHING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FAMILIES

An explanation needs to be given about the differences between birth families foster families and growing up families.

Resources: Make visual charts of the birth family tree and the foster family tree with the child.

### CALENDARS/TIMELINES

Get used to using calendars or daily timelines to help the child become orientated in time and place.

Resources needed: Calendar / daily timeline

### FINAL CONTACTS WITH BIRTH FAMILY

These should be facilitated at least 4 weeks prior to the introduction of a new family to allow the child opportunity to grieve their loss before they are introduced to a New Family. Should they not be allowed this time it is possible that their grief will become linked to the meeting of the new family and as such could affect

the attachment process. It is important for them to have had opportunity to recognise their loss before they begin new relationships. A parting card or small gift may be exchanged marking the significance of the ending of a relationship. Photos taken during the final contacts should be included in their memory box along with anything the birth family is prepared to share about their recollection of their child whilst in their care. A positive leaving message from birth family members

Resources needed: Gift / card photos to share and to be taken. Preparation to be undertaken with the birth family about their parting message and also collation of information about their recollections of their child to be collected for inclusion in their Lifestory book.

## ADDING TO THE NARRATIVE STORY

Give an explanation that a Growing up family is being sought for them, what this means and how this is going to be carried out. Explain who will be part of the searching process and reassure the child that they will be seeking the best possible family that is just right for them as an individual. Growing up families are checked out to make sure they are safe and can do all of the things that children need. Reassure them that they will be told everything about them and their past so that they will understand what has happened to them and will be able to help them with anything that may be difficult for them. They will be understood loved cared for and safe within their growing up family. Growing up families can be another foster family or an adoptive family.

## CHILDREN'S STORY BOOKS

Introduce storybooks that address the notion of adoption into the child's library of books to read. E.g. The Teazles, baby Bunny, A Safe Place for Rufus, Chester and Daisy Move On, Dennis and the Big Decisions, Coco Finds a new Mum.

Resources: List of children's story books and films

## RELATIONSHIP BASED PLAY TECHNIQUES

Introduce three Relationship based play techniques for the carer to use with the child on a regular basis. These techniques should be

identified as those best suited to the individual child and will be passed on to the Adoptive parents to continue with the child when they move placement. Advice will be given as to which three techniques should be used and how they are carried out.

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAMILIES

Use pictures to explore with the child the different kinds of families there are. E.g. Mum and dad, single parents, same sex couples, parents with disabilities. Give them an idea of the diversity of families and how they may be able fit into these families.

Resources: Photos and story books of different family constitutions

## HOPES AND FEARS OF MOVING TO A GROWING UP FAMILY

Help the child to identify their hopes and fears using feeling faces to draw up a list. In doing so their hopes and fears are named and can be shared and this will help to reduce their anxiety Resources: Pens / pencils crayons and paper

## ALL ABOUT ME BOOK

Use a large piece of paper and fold it in half so that it is like a card. Ask the child how they think other people would describe them. Help the child to write or draw these descriptions on the front outside of the card.

Then ask the child how they would describe themselves and write or draw these descriptions on the inside of the card. Encourage the child to talk about emotions and traits as well as physical characteristics. Include things they enjoy and things that worry or scare them. End with asking the child what they would like the new family to know about them – allow them to choose from the “inside” or the “outside” descriptions on the card. The child can colour or decorate the card. This activity may be done over time rather than in one sitting.

Resources: Pens pencils paper stickers paint glue cut out pictures

## THE NOW CALENDAR

This helps to give the child a sense of continuity when contemplating a move to a permanent placement.

Draw a simple calendar representing a week on a large piece of paper. Divide each day between morning, afternoon and evening of each day. Talk about what usually happens each morning, afternoon and evening of each day. Help the child to fill in the calendar. Ask which routines and activities are fun, boring or important to the child. Decide together which of these they would like the new family to know about. Include the food, drink the child likes, TV programmes, indoor and outdoor activities and bedtime routines.

Ask the child if they would like you to use the calendar to tell their new family about them. Encourage the child to talk about some of the things that might have to change in a new household.

(Preparing Children for Permanence Mary Romaine with Tricia Turley and Non Tuckey - BAAF)

## THE FAMILY BOOK IS SHARED WITH THE CHILD

The adoptive family will have prepared a book/DVD introducing themselves to the child inviting them to become part of their family. The child should be allowed to look at the book/DVD as often as they like with their carer rather than alone and be encouraged to talk about their hopes and fears about moving to their new family. If fears are not explored this gives the message that they are not allowed to have negative thoughts and feelings, as these are either taboo or unacceptable. Identifying positives and negatives is far healthier for the child in terms of minimising the trauma and promoting a healthy transition process. This becomes the next part of the child's narrative story and can be shared by the child with teachers, friends and member of the foster family ie all of those important to the child.

Read Morris and the Bundle of Worries or the Big Bag of Worries to help encourage the child to share any worries they may have. Demonstrate that no worries are too big to be sorted.

Resources: Morris and the Big Bundle of Worries, the Big Bag of Worries

Endings can now be facilitated by school and foster family to allow space for the introductions to the new family become the focus of the way forward for the child.

## THE MOVING CALENDAR

Similar to the calendar above but the focus is on the moving timetable i.e. planned visits and overnight stays, farewell celebration leading up to the final move.

This should be given to the child a few days at a time and not too far in advance. It will help the child to feel more in control of the introductions if they have an understanding of what is happening where and when and who is involved. Resources: Moving Calendar template can be provided

**ADDING TO THE NARRATIVE STORY** Foster carers provide the story of the child's experience with them whilst in their care.

**INTRODUCTIONS** During introductions the All about Me book can be shared by the child along with the entire narrative story both of which allow the child to share their story through their work.

Adopters need to be taught the Relationship based play activities to do with the child during these early stages to promote positive attachments. Read: I Wished for You, Guess How Much I Love you, The Teazles Baby Bunny, Motherbridge of Love Resources: Reading books and items to facilitate three relationship based play activities.

## MOVING COLLAGE

With the child help make a collage of a variety of houses to put on the wall depicting a pathway between them and using pictures or photographs to show who lives in the houses. At least one house should be left free for the Adoptive family to become included in the collage as soon as the child is told about the family. Pictures may be moved between the houses when introductions have begun to illustrate the process. All houses should have letterboxes and there should be a post box in the collage to demonstrate how contact may be maintained. Resources; Colourful thick painting paper and paints, felt tips to make collage

## SHOEBOX HOUSES

Involve the child in the making of or playing with a group of shoebox houses to promote the notion of visiting/moving to a new house. Allow the child to decorate and explore with them what they would like to have in the houses, how they may like it to be decorated etc. Give them a sense of different houses looking and

feeling different but still having the capacity to keep children safe and well cared for.

Read age appropriate stories related to adoption:

Rufus finds a Safe place to stay, My New Family

### ROAD/PATH PLAYMAT

Use the road/path play mat in a similar way to the shoebox houses. Use cars and people to show how people can be transported from one venue to another. Show them things like the school, shops a hospital and playground nearby, things that will be familiar to them and will be found in the community that they will be moving to. Resources: toy cars, road mat, people and houses.

### PAINTING/DRAWING/MODELLING

Allow the child opportunity to explore themes of families and moving in their own way.

### MEMORY BOX

The bringing together of items of special significance to the child which he/she can take to their adoptive placement. This could include all things special which have taken place in the child's life to date e.g. a lock of hair from first haircut, a lost tooth, a favourite baby toy or comforter, photographs, school reports etc. The Memory box is very significant in terms of both Identity and History. If carried by the child when leaving foster placement the child is symbolically owning their identity and history and taking it with them to their adoptive placement. It should never be left behind. Resources: Sturdy Memory Box big enough to house all the contents

LIFE STORY BOOK all of the direct work undertaken with the child as part of the Transition Process can be used to form a significant part of the child's Life story book. This book should be completed and passed over at the Second Adoption Review

LETTERBOX CONTACT The child should be leaving foster placement with an understanding of what contact arrangements are in place with regards to foster carers and also with birth family members so they don't have to worry about them.



LATER LIFE LETTERS should also have been completed and provided at the second adoption review.

## PRACTICAL TOOLS REQUIRED WHEN PREPARING CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION

Feeling faces plates/cups/pin wheel Eco Map Family trees for Birth foster and adoptive family Narrative story Relationship Based play technique materials to be provided Photos of different kinds of families Feelings flash cards All about Me book Hopes and Fears chart Now Calendar Moving Calendar Daily Routine charts Children's stories and film book list

Developed by Julie Howes Social worker Western Bay Post Adoption Support Team.



## 2. Ideas – what to put in a child’s memory box





(Remember to label items so child understands the significance of them)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>0-4 years old</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospital identity tag</li> <li>• Health record book</li> <li>• Scan photo</li> <li>• Milk teeth</li> <li>• Sample of hair</li> <li>• First set of clothing</li> <li>• Baby photos</li> <li>• Umbilical peg</li> <li>• Nursery / playgroup art work / cards</li> <li>• Newspaper issued on day of child’s birth</li> <li>• Hand and foot prints of the baby</li> <li>• Favourite toy</li> <li>• Favourite bedtime story</li> <li>• Christening / birthday cards</li> <li>• Jewellery</li> <li>• First holiday photos</li> <li>• Family photos</li> <li>• Dummy</li> <li>• Height chart</li> </ul> | <p><b>5-10 year olds</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos of festivities – birthdays / Christmas etc.</li> <li>• Art and crafts made by the child</li> <li>• Favourite books / DVDs</li> <li>• Collected items e.g. pebbles</li> <li>• Football jerseys</li> <li>• Pictures of pets, pet collar etc.</li> <li>• Toys</li> <li>• Leaflets of places visited</li> <li>• Favourite sweet wrappers</li> <li>• School tie / badge</li> <li>• Drawings</li> <li>• Picture of favourite teacher / school attended /class photos</li> <li>• School reports</li> <li>• Photos from holidays / days out</li> <li>• Samples of mum / dad’s favourite perfume</li> <li>• Items of favourite clothing</li> <li>• Certificates / medals / awards</li> <li>• Photos of siblings</li> <li>• Photos of friends</li> <li>• Anything from the 0-4 list</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>11+</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos</li> <li>• Awards / achievements</li> <li>• Programmes / tickets</li> <li>• Favourite magazine / comic</li> <li>• Medals</li> <li>• Magnets from places visited and any other souvenirs / knick-knacks</li> <li>• Posters / favourite bands</li> <li>• Favourite books / CDs / DVDs</li> <li>• Cards received</li> <li>• Football / rugby team - tops / caps</li> <li>• Friendship bracelets</li> <li>• Trading cards</li> <li>• Stickers</li> <li>• Newspaper clippings</li> <li>• School shirt signed by the class when leaving school</li> </ul>   |   |




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AFA Cymru offers advice, training and consultancy to professionals and to members of the public.

## 3. (Name) Moving Calendar

| DATE  | EVENT   | MY FEELINGS |
|---|---|-------------|
| <p>On Monday</p> <p>00/00/00</p>   | <p>(Social Worker's name)<br/>WILL come to see ME. SHE<br/>WILL BRING PHOTO'S AND<br/>A DVD ABOUT MY<br/>ADOPTIVE FAMILY.</p>   |             |
| <p>On Tuesday</p> <p>00/00/00</p>   | <p>MY ADOPTIVE FAMILY<br/>WILL COME TO MEET ME<br/>AT (FOSTER CARERS<br/>NAMES) HOUSE.</p>  |             |
| <p>On Wednesday</p> <p>00/00/00</p>   | <p>Today will be a school day.</p> <p>I will be able to tell my<br/>teacher and friends I have<br/>an ADOPTIVE FAMILY.</p> <p>(ADOPTIVE PARENTS<br/>NAMES)<br/>WILL COME TO SEE ME<br/>AFTER SCHOOL THEY<br/>WILL STAY FOR TEA.</p> |             |

# (Name) Moving Calendar

| DATE   | EVENT   | MY FEELINGS |
|--|---|-------------|
| <p>On Thursday</p>  <p>00/00/00</p>    | <p>ADOPTIVE PARENTS NAMES<br/>WILL TAKE ME OUT, (FOSTER<br/>CARERS NAMES) WILL COME<br/>TOO!</p>  |             |
| <p>On Friday</p>  <p>00/00/00</p>   | <p>TODAY I WILL SAY GOODBYE TO<br/>MY FRIENDS AND TEACHERS.<br/>THEY WILL BE HAPPY BECAUSE<br/>I HAVE A LOVELY ADOPTIVE<br/>FAMILY.</p> <p>(ADOPTIVE PARENTS NAMES)<br/>CAN PICK ME UP AND SAY<br/>HELLO TO MY TEACHER.</p> |             |
| <p>On Saturday</p>  <p>00/00/00</p> | <p>(ADOPTIVE PARENTS NAMES)</p> <p>WILL COME FOR BREAKFAST.<br/>WE WILL GO OUT FOR THE DAY,<br/>(FOSTER CARERS NAMES) WILL<br/>COME TOO!</p>  |             |



**On Sunday**

**00/00/00**

**(ADOPTIVE PARENTS NAMES)  
WILL TAKE ME OUT FOR THE  
DAY.**

**On Monday**



**00/00/00**

**(ADOPTIVE PARENTS  
NAMES)**

**WILL COME TO  
BREAKFAST.**

**THEN (FOSTER CARERS  
NAMES) WILL TAKE ME TO  
VISIT MY NEW HOUSE.**

**On Tuesday**



**(ADOPTIVE PARENTS NAMES)**

**WILL ARRIVE EARLY TO PICK  
ME UP AND THEN WE WILL  
SPEND THE DAY AT MY NEW  
HOUSE.**

**(SOCIAL WORKERS NAMES)  
WILL COME TO SEE ME, I CAN  
TELL HER ALL ABOUT MY  
NEW PARENTS**

# (Name) Moving Calendar

| DATE | EVENT | MY FEELINGS |
|------|-------|-------------|
|------|-------|-------------|

**On Wednesday**



00/00/00

IN THE MORNING THE GROWNUPS WILL HAVE A MEETING TO MAKE SURE I'M DOING OK.

THEN MY GROWING UP FAMILY TAKE ME TO MY NEW HOUSE.

I WILL HAVE A BATH AND PUT MY PJS ON. I WILL THEN TAKE ME BACK TO (FOSTER CARERS NAMES) HOUSE FOR BED.

**(SOCIAL WORKERS NAME) WILL FINISH MY CALENDAR AFTER THE MEETING.**

**On Thursday**




00/00/00

TODAY I WILL SPEND THE DAY AT MY HOUSE.

**MUMMY AND DADDY** WILL BRING ME BACK TO **(FOSTER CARERS NAMES)** HOUSE READY FOR BED.

# (Name) Moving Calendar

| DATE  | EVENT   | MY FEELINGS |
|---|---|-------------|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On Friday</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>00/00/00</b></p> | <p><b>TODAY I WILL MOVE TO MY NEW HOUSE TO LIVE WITH MUMMY AND DADDY .</b></p> <p><b>WE WILL BE A FAMILY AND MUMMY AND DADDY WILL LOVE US AND LOOK AFTER US FOR ALWAYS.</b></p> |             |

The moving calendar is designed in loose pages so that the direct worker / foster carer can “feed” to the child in manageable stages. They need to understand what will happen that day and then the next.

Some like this visual reminder displayed, maybe on their bedroom wall. Others prefer to look at it and then put it aside. We have found it to be very effective in helping the child keep pace with the introductions process, while minimising anxiety.

Created by Western Bay Adoption team.

## 4. 'What you should know about me' Guidance and Template

Completing the profile

### Section 1

Make a clear distinction between the child's "given" name and the child's "preferred" name, i.e. what they would like to be called.

The people in my family – a chance to explore with the child who they consider to be "family". The children and young people consulted with had very strong feelings about including information about their siblings. Be mindful that they may be separated from their sibling(s) by placement, circumstances or even by death. Exploring who the child considers family can also be ascertained by doing family trees, genograms and family circles.

The background of my family/community – include here details of the child's ethnicity and cultural and religious background.

### Section 2

An opportunity to explore how the child/young person is faring at school. If the young person you are working with is out of education and employment, Section 11 offers the opportunity for them to specify what they would like to do.

### Section 3

It is important to ascertain whether children and young people have concerns about any health conditions or physical disabilities that they may have. One young person consulted said: 'It's scary if you think those who should know, don't'.

### Section 4

An opportunity to find out what the child/young person likes doing by way of hobbies or leisure time activities. Equally, a chance to find out if there are any obstacles preventing the young person from pursuing activities of their choice.

### Section 5

Use this section to explore what the child/young person likes, whether it be food, arts, fashion, games, and so on. The prompts provided were suggested by the young people consulted.

### Section 6

This section provides a chance to explore what the child/young person doesn't like, and why. You could use direct work techniques to explore this further if it seems difficult for the child to answer.



## Section 7

Similarly, completing this section could provide an insight into things the child/young person is feeling anxious about, both in the present as well as in the future.

## Section 8

Responses to this section will clearly signpost the person or people the child/young person trusts enough to share their problems with. The young people who were consulted specifically asked for this question to be revised from the original, 'The people I can talk to...' to 'The people I feel I can talk to if I have any problems...' – a subtle change but one that signifies a big difference.

## Section 9

You could encourage the child to think beyond their immediate family to also include friends, schoolmates, professionals they have worked with, neighbours, people from the community around them, and so on. Responses could reveal additional support networks not previously considered.

## Section 10

Getting the child to think about what they have achieved so far and what they have become can provide an opportunity to build their self-esteem and sense of self. You could also find out who is proud of the child and why, and record this.

## Section 11

This section provides a chance to explore with the child aspirations they might have for the future. For some, this might be difficult, as they may not have done this before. You could explore with the child what they would like to become, the kind of career they might want, where they might want to live and the kind of home, what sort of family they would want to belong to, and so on. It is important to support the child to have aspirations for their future, both immediate and in the longer term.

## Section 12

There could well be other things the child/young person may want to add about themselves. Those who were consulted asked for this question to be added.

## Section 13

This profile should be countersigned by the professional who has worked with the child/ young person to complete this profile. It also provides an opportunity for the professional to record any additional information in consultation with the child/young person and with their permission.

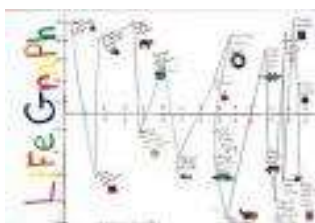
# What you should know about me - Template



What you should  
know about me.pdf

Right click on this icon and select 'Acrobat document object to open in a new window.

## 5. History flow chart - Katie Wrench



### Life Graph / Life Map

#### Aims

- To assess the child's position and understanding of his story at the beginning of your work. You will learn as much by looking at what is missing from the image as by noticing what the child chooses to include.
- To explore the child's success and accomplishments in life as well as any difficulties he has experienced along the way. In this matter you will have the opportunity to boost the child's resilience and confidence and the story will not become too problem-saturated.
- To engage and build a relationship with the child by making an image together.

#### Materials

Large piece of drawing paper and pens / crayons. Optional: Photos, magazines, craft materials and clip-art images suitable for the theme.



#### Process

Together with the child, design an image that represents his life story, reflecting his own experiences – both highs and lows – and different life stages. He can write dates, names and places or use pictures, photographs or symbols to illustrate his story. Remember to let the child go at his own pace as he is unlikely to recall events in chronological order and is most likely to prefer to start with things that are important to him in the here and now.

Renee Rossouw reminds us that children cannot always remember things about their early lives clearly and sometimes the information they have been given is not accurate ('Life story book work – weaving together strands', *Child and Youth Care*, Rossouw 2003, p.14).

Nonetheless, resist the temptation to add information yourself initially or to make corrections where you feel the child has been mistaken. Here the child may have about his story. You will learn where gaps need to be filled later or distorted thinking corrected. Don't feel you have to complete the life map in one session – we often come back to them time and again in the following weeks.

The image can be as creative or simple as you choose, but often by theming the activity to respond to the child's special interests you will increase engagement. For example, for a young child who likes playing with cars, you could make a road map image, using road signs and markings to enhance the story. We have seen great sporting analogies and TV soap stars used to tell a story too!

## Handy Hints

This activity could also be used with adult birth family members to gain their perspectives on past experiences. You will have the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives of the child's story, all of which are valid. However, it will be important to assess whether the child has the developmental capacity to assimilate multiple truths before including them in his story.

You might also be able to encourage the child to link events on his life graph with feelings, using resources you made during the emotional literacy phase of this work.

*Extract from Life Story Work with Children who are Fostered or Adopted, Creative Ideas and Activities, by Katie Wrench and Lesley Naylor (ISBN 978-1-84905-343-3)*

Donated to the NAS LJW Toolkit by Katie Wrench, co- author of *Life Story Work with Children Who are Fostered or Adopted, Creative Ideas and Activities*, by Katie Wrench and Lesley Naylor (ISBN 978-1-84905-343-3)

## 6. Digital life story work

The publication of 'Digital life story work' by Simon Hammond and Neil Cooper (2013, BAAF London) provides practitioners with an easy to follow manual that promotes the use of technological resources in the development of life journey work. The authors recommend that we "tap into the things that young people are already doing in their everyday life and use these communication tools to encourage reflection within young people".

Suggestions for digital life story work include:

- Using a camera phone to film 'a day in my life'
- Digitising old or current photos
- Recording a personal story and saving as an audio file / burn onto CD
- Linking music with emotions and meanings – making a sound track
- Making a photo collage / mash-up using on line tools
- Making a three minute movie – using '*windows movie maker*' or *iMovie*
- Pod-walk - Revisiting significant locations with a video camera and recording stories the places evoke then burning these onto DVD
- Using Google Earth to revisit places where a child has lived / gone to school etc. from the safety and comfort of where the child lives now.

### Interactive life journey work

- For children who enjoy interactive activities BAAF developed interactive life journey work on a CD Rom: 'My Life Story' by Bridgett Betts and Afshan Ahmad. This provides a wide range of colourful interactive games / activities with sounds, for children to record different aspects of their life.

### Recommended links to assist in digital LJW

Make Beliefs Comix- This is a great website that is recommended by Simon Hammond and Neil Cooper (2013 BAAF London). It can be used in a variety of ways with children and can help children to express feelings through the use of characters they have created. <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>

Google Earth - [https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en\\_uk/earth/](https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/)

Story Jumper –This is a US site. It offers the opportunity to easily create online and physical books, the site offers options to add audio to the books, such as voices and music.

<https://www.storyjumper.com/>

## 7. Useful LJW ideas - book websites - Katie Wrench

Blossom Social Care Training

**Donated to the NAS LJW Toolkit by Katie Wrench, co- author of *Life Story Work with Children Who are Fostered or Adopted, Creative Ideas and Activities*, by Katie Wrench and Lesley Naylor**

**(ISBN 978-1-84905-343-3)**

### Useful LJW book websites

[www.birthstones.org/uk](http://www.birthstones.org/uk) - Information and facts about birthstones and birth flowers.

[www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com) - Look up the child's name and tell them the meaning.

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com) – Great for maps, images etc. You can look up addresses and it will show you on a map.

[www.dayofbirth.co.uk](http://www.dayofbirth.co.uk) – Find interesting, fun facts about the day and year the child was born.

[www.history.com/fdih](http://www.history.com/fdih) - Suitable for older children. Look up what happened on the day they were born.

[www.genopro.com/genogram](http://www.genopro.com/genogram) - How to build a genogram. You can also download the package for a trial period and put the information into your computer which will build the genogram for you.

[www.famous.adoption.com](http://www.famous.adoption.com) – An alphabetical list of over 700 famous or influential people who were either adopted, fostered, lived in residential unit or were raised by people other than birth parents.

[www.paranormality.com/birth\\_sign.shtml](http://www.paranormality.com/birth_sign.shtml) - A guide to western and Chinese birth signs

## 8. Metaphorical Stories - Katie Wrench

**By kind permission of Katie Wrench - *Life Story Work with Children who are Fostered or Adopted - Creative Ideas and Activities*. Wrench & Naylor (pp. 84-89) 2013, Jessica Kinsley Publishers)**

### Metaphorical Stories

#### Aims

To use a creative method to tell the child's story.

To use metaphor as a safe way to explore difficult issues with the younger child.

To give the child permission to explore their history through story and play.

For the child to have a story they can keep and come back to whenever they want perhaps with their foster carer or adoptive parent. Repetition is often the key to information processing for traumatized children.

#### Materials

A story you have prepared for the child (optional – toys or figures to use in the telling of the story).

#### Process

Stories can be powerful tools to help children explore very difficult issues. For the younger child in particular a story about a mouse, prince or dinosaur who has some of the same problems as them can be easier than talking about it directly. The use of metaphor allows for distance from the child's own painful experiences so that the feelings can be more easily and safely thought about and discussed.

Whilst there are story books on the market that explore issues such as parental mental health or bereavement, we usually prefer to write an individual story for the child; one that speaks directly to their circumstances but uses other characters to represent them or their family. Think about whether the child has a particular interest that you could incorporate, such as dinosaurs or fairy tales. Then create a simple story that is developmentally appropriate to the child. We either use photographs of small toys or figures to illustrate the story or use clipart or Google images.

Remember to reflect the feelings of the characters as you go along. The advantage of photographing miniatures or figures is that it allows you to tell the story and act it



out at the same time which can be more engaging for younger children. You may need to practice this first! At the end of this activity you will find an example of a story we have written that includes elements of real stories produced for children we have worked with.

### **Handy Hints**

This is a good activity in which to include the carer so that s/he can continue to read the story to the child at appropriate times. The child may need to come back to their story again and again in order to begin to internalise it.

Don't assume that because you have written about a family of animals rather than the child's own family that they won't be affected by this activity. It can bring up painful emotions and you and the carer need to be able to support the child just as if you were telling them directly what happened to them.

Useful published stories we have used with children include:

*The Wise Mouse*, Virginia Ironside, 2003, Young Minds. (Describes parental mental health issues).

*Elfa and the Box of Memories*, Michelle Bell, 2008, BAAF. (About the importance of memories, it includes a workbook for the child to explore their own memories).

Trace Moroney *Feeling Series*, 2011, Brimax. (About rabbits with different feelings).

*Dennis Duckling*, Paul Sambrooks, 2009, BAAF. (Tells the story of having to leave birth family and go into care).

*Six Dinner Sid*, Igna Moore, 2010, Hodder Children's Books. (About a cat whose carers go away on holiday and leave him).

*Owl Babies*, Martin Waddell, 1994, Walker Books Ltd. (About missing your mum).

*Jade's Story*, Helena Pielichaty, 2002, OUP Oxford. (A story about parental depression for older children).

*The Nutmeg Series*, Judith Foxon, 2001-2007, BAAF. (Stories about a squirrel's experiences of adoption, contact, new sibling, challenging behaviour).

*Badger's Parting Gift*, Susan Varley, 1997, Magi Publications. (Bereavement).

### **Sample metaphorical story suitable for a child under 8.**

#### **NB: This would be illustrated for a child with photographs of figures/toys or clipart**

Once upon a time, which is how all good stories begin, there lived a cheeky little monkey called Marvin. Marvin lived with mummy and daddy monkey and his little sister Mandy. Mummy and daddy monkey loved their little monkeys very much.

Sometimes they all enjoyed fun times playing in the jungle and swinging from the trees, but sadly life was not always this happy in the monkey den. Let me tell you why...

Now of course, it was mummy and daddy monkeys' job to take good care of Marvin and Mandy because they were such special cheeky monkeys. All little monkeys need warm, safe dens to live in and parents who can keep them safe and feed them tasty bananas and monkey milk. They need a mummy and daddy who can give them big monkey cuddles when they're feeling sad or scared. It was very sad that mummy and daddy monkey found it very hard to always put their little monkeys first which is what all mummies and daddies should do.

You see, sometimes mummy and daddy monkey were so busy making themselves feel happy that they forgot about taking care of their babies and left Marvin and Mandy alone in the monkey den. Poor babies! So Marvin, who was the best big brother in the world, tried his hardest to make sure his little sister was OK. He did a brilliant job, but he had to do much more looking after than any little monkey should have to do, trying to make sure Mandy had enough monkey milk and bananas to eat.

What's more, the mummy and daddy monkey didn't always get along. Sometimes the daddy monkey would get very cross. He would shout at mummy monkey and even hit her when the babies were watching. I don't know if you've ever heard monkeys getting angry with each other, but what a loud, screeching noise they make! This meant that sometimes the monkey den was a scary place for the little monkeys to be because there was so much shouting and fighting. I wonder if the mummy and daddy monkey realised just how scared their babies would feel when they screeched so fiercely.

After a while, other animal neighbours started to feel very worried about the little monkeys. They weren't sure that anyone was keeping them safe, making sure that they had a nice warm home to live in and enough bananas to eat. They asked a kind elephant called Mary to come and visit the monkey family to try to help. It was her job to make sure the little monkeys were safe and well. Mary Elephant told the monkey parents that there was too much fighting and screeching in the den for the babies to hear. She tried really hard to help mummy and daddy monkey to look after their little monkeys better. She even asked other friendly animals to help too, but sadly the mummy and daddy monkey didn't always want help. This was a big worry for everyone...

One day a neighbour found Marvin and Mandy all alone in a very cold monkey den and she knew she had to tell Mary Elephant about this. Mary decided she had to do something very quickly to keep these precious little monkeys safe. She had to find another family to take care of them while she kept on trying to help the mummy and daddy monkey. Mary knew of a really kind giraffe family, Graham and Gertie, who looked after baby animals who couldn't live with their own mummies and daddies

anymore. This mummy and daddy giraffe knew just how to keep little monkeys safe and to make sure they had everything they needed to grow up to be big and strong and healthy. In the giraffe home there was always enough to eat and, best of all, there was no screeching or fighting.

So the baby monkeys went to live in their new home, which felt very strange and scary for them indeed. Marvin still sometimes worried about not having enough to eat, even though they had lovely dinners every day and lots of treats. He also still felt he should take care of his little sister Mandy. But we have to remember that when Marvin lived with mummy and daddy monkey he often went hungry and had to look after Mandy and make sure she was safe. He had to be a brave, strong little monkey and try to look after himself and Mandy.

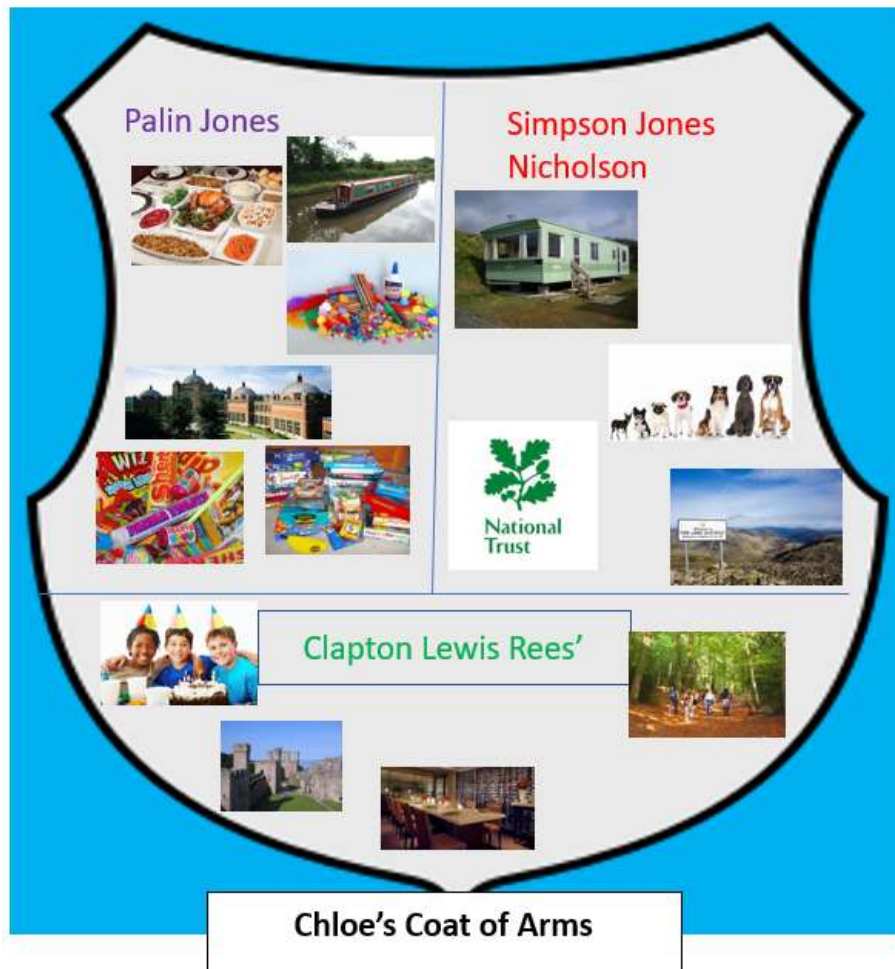
It was sometimes hard for Marvin to feel at home with Graham and Gertie Giraffe. He missed his mummy and daddy and looked forward to seeing them at contact. Now of course mummy and daddy monkeys still loved their two little monkeys very, very much. Even so, after lots and lots of careful thinking, all the helping animals decided that they wouldn't be able to look after these precious little monkeys well enough. It was very sad for everyone.

The good news is that now Marvin and Mandy are growing up to be big, strong monkeys with Graham and Gertie Giraffe, who have got to know them very well and care for them so much! They make sure Marvin goes to bed at the right time so he can get up for monkey school and not feel too tired. They know when he's feeling sad and missing mummy and daddy and know just what to do to make him feel better. He gets lots of hugs and stories and plenty of fun and warm, cuddly times. And that is just what a cheeky little monkey needs!

## 9.Coat of arms

This is a creative way to explore identity. There are many downloadable coats of arms available on the web, or the child / young person may choose to draw his / her own.

The coat of arms can be used in many ways, such as to draw the activities and hobbies the child enjoys or to depict the people that are important in the child's life and the memories they have shared (as demonstrated below).



Created by Chloe (age 13 years)

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