



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## **Briefing:**

A summary of Food For Thought Resources

*Are you looking for new ways to understand or work with children and young people?*

*Are you interested in exploring staff or foster carers' experiences of caring?*

*Do you want to have a chance to explore the values that underpin the care offered by your staff or carers?*

*Are you keen to develop creative, everyday ways of supporting children and young people?*

*Are you interested in thinking about the ways in which food, and the practices around it, impacts on children's experiences of looked after care?*

## Partners

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**CELCIS** Centre for excellence  
in looked after children in Scotland

# INTRODUCTION

The Food for Thought resources provide residential staff, foster carers and their managers with tools to look at the ways in which food and the practices around it are being used in the care of children and young people.

The resources are based on research which showed that food can be a useful lens to look at how care is being delivered, received and experienced by both children and adults. It highlighted that, far from being simply about nutrition, food can hold significant symbolic value. In other words, how food is purchased, prepared, delivered and consumed has important social meaning. Such practices and experiences of food can come to stand for a wide variety of thoughts, beliefs and feelings. For example, food can be a powerful way of showing care for others; it can give out very clear messages about how people are feeling at certain times and how they relate to others. It can help with children's recovery from past hurt and be a nurturing as well as expressive medium for children and their carers. Food can be used by children and adults alike, to convey difficult feelings and thoughts. Food helps in the creation and maintenance of relationships and can make an important contribution to feelings of belonging and identity. The simplest of activities, from baking a cake for someone's special event to knowing how they take their coffee can be harnessed by adults and children to powerful effect. The resources outlined in this briefing have been created to support deeper reflection and positive intervention around the everyday use of food.



# RESOURCES

The following Food For Thought resources are aimed at those working directly with looked after children and young people, including foster carers, residential care workers, supervisors and managers. They are freely-available for downloading at:

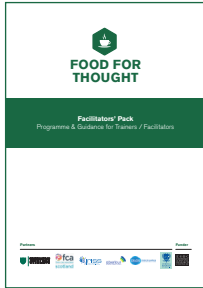
<http://www.foodforthoughtproject.info/resources>

They were developed and designed in a two year partnership between staff from the School of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling, FCA Scotland, Aberlour Child Care Trust, Perth and Kinross Council, the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCIS) and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS).

Working groups were held with foster carers, residential workers and managers to design, develop and pilot all the materials during 2012-2013.

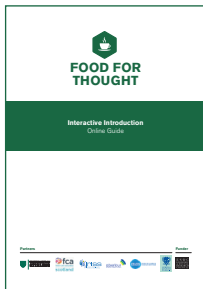


## 1. Reflective Workshop Materials: Facilitators' Pack and Handouts



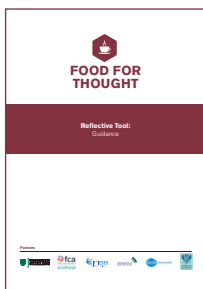
The main aim of the Reflective Workshop is to introduce residential workers and foster carers to the key concepts and issues involved in the symbolic use of food and to think with others about how they might apply this to their own care practices. The Facilitators' Pack (including PowerPoint slides and notes) aims to provide the support and materials that trainers and facilitators will need to run Reflective Workshops in their organisations.

## 2. Interactive Introduction to Food for Thought



The Interactive Introduction has been developed in recognition that it can be difficult for carers and workers to get to a Reflective Workshop at a time of their choosing. This short online guide introduces the user to some of the key concepts relating to Food for Thought. It aims to raise awareness of the relationship between food as a symbol and care. Users of this resource are asked to reflect on their own experiences and relate these to some of the key findings of our research.

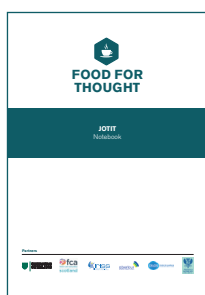
## 3. Reflective Tool (electronic and hard copy versions)



The Reflective Tool is intended to be used by individual carers or residential workers after they have attended the Reflective Workshop or completed the Interactive Introduction. The Reflective Tool will guide users through a series of questions and prompts to create a 'snapshot' of their personal food-related interactions with individual children in their care. It is intended that, through such reflection, carers working in any context will be more able to articulate issues and understand the significance of their own, as well as the young person's behaviours, values, expectations and feelings.

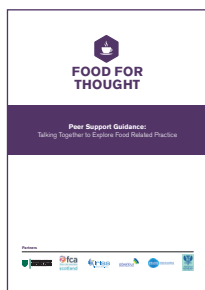
The Reflective Tool is a way to record thoughts and issues about individual children so that progress over time can be seen more easily or discussions with supervisors or support workers can be focussed on specific topics of immediate relevance. In addition, it can be used to encourage reflection prior to foster care support meetings, group supervision discussions or staff meetings. Detailed Reflective Tool Guidance is provided as a separate resource to avoid downloading each time the Reflective Tool is used.

## 4. JOTIT Notebook



The JOTIT Notebook is intended as a space for carers, staff or young people to write down food-related reflections or events as they occur. Carers and staff may not have many opportunities for lengthy periods of structured reflection. The JOTIT provides a way to collect reminders of issues and events as they happen for those times when reflection is more possible. This resource can be completed by one person or a team/family. They may choose to draw on their JOTIT notes to complete the Reflective Tool, to prepare for supervision with managers or support workers or to act as a reminder prior to Peer Support discussion.

## 5. Peer Support Guidance



Peer Support Guidance is provided for facilitators and supervisors who will be running the peer support discussions. Whilst the Reflective Workshops primarily concentrate on raising awareness and engaging in introductory discussion about the role of food in care, we have found that carers and residential workers need opportunities to discuss these issues in relation to the situations they are facing on a day to day basis. Peer Support groups which focus on food practices provide opportunities to share experiences or concerns about food and to learn with and from others in similar situations.

All of the Food for Thought resources are linked to research findings from the Food and Care Study (FaCS) which explored the symbolic role of food and food practices in the care of looked after children. This research, based at the University of Stirling, was summarised in *A Resource Handbook for Reflection* (download for free at <http://www.foodforthought-project.info/resources>) and a separate leaflet for children.

## Thanks

The Food for Thought partnership would like to thank all the children, foster carers and staff who took part in the original FaCS study as well as the Food For Thought Project. Thanks are also extended to Carol George (the project researcher), to Ailsa Brannan (FosterPlus) for her guidance and to the project funders (Economic and Social Research Council).





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