



Gwasanaeth
Mabwysiadu
Cenedlaethol

National
Adoption
Service



AFKA
CYMRU

Cymdeithas ar gyfer Maethu,
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Association for Fostering,
Kinship and Adoption

ADOPTION QUALITIES AND SKILLS

FRAMEWORK



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Introduction

Adoption Qualities and Skills Framework

Analysis and critical thinking in assessment has consistently been highlighted as a concern in inspection reports, family court proceedings, serious case reviews and inquiries into child deaths.....Critical thinking is purposeful...it involves maintaining an open minded attitude and being able to think about different ways of understanding the information before you. And critical thinking also includes a process of evaluating claims and arguments in order to come to logical and consistent conclusions, assessing these conclusions against clear and relevant criteria or standards, and being able to spell out the reasons for the judgments you have made (Brown and Turney. 2014).

Within the National Adoption Service for Wales, there is significant expertise in our adoption teams, with experienced practitioners who are well informed and aware of what is required for successful adoptive parenting and who are excellent in working with families and gathering relevant information. However, as part of our ongoing professional development and commitment to consistent practice in Wales, there is always scope to strengthen our critical thinking and written analysis skills within our assessments, to strengthen and enable the move from analysis as a process – a part of almost every moment of everyday practice that we do well and which involves a wide range of skills, intuition and expertise – to analysis as a written product which is central to identifying prospective adopters for the most vulnerable children in our society, and to enabling good matching between them.

There was no agreed criteria of Adoption Qualities and Skills to assess our findings against, especially when analysing the more nebulous presenting issues and their relevance to parenting through adoption. This framework addresses this.

”

This is not about something that will insult experienced staff's huge expertise and competence...it is actually drawing upon that knowledge and experience, sharing it and learning from it.

What the framework is and what it isn't

The framework is a stand alone overarching document that sets out an agreed criteria of Qualities and Skills associated with successful adoptive parenting. It is designed as a live reference tool for practitioners, to be used alongside the CoramBAAF Prospective Adopter's Report (PAR) (Wales) template and guidance notes (or any similar template and guidance), in assessment and supervision discussions. Applicants should also be fully aware of the framework and expectations in terms of what is required, evidence and verification.

There is no expectation for practitioners to duplicate work or material, and no expectation for a completed framework to be presented to panel for each applicant/s. Neither is there an expectation for a "portfolio of evidence" to be collated and presented to panel.

We recognise that writing a PAR is a dynamic process that involves critical thinking, testing, refining, hypothesising, refining more. Making notes and drafting ideas, creating opportunities for reflection are central to analysis - and the framework provides opportunities to do this. The core aim of the framework is to help practitioners to synthesise and analyse data, evaluate it and draw conclusions - essentially to tie relevant information and evidence to the task that the applicants are being assessed against, parenting vulnerable children. It does this by thinking of analysis as being made up of 4 key elements – all of which need to be captured well within the PAR to make it an analytical and robust document:

Description (What?) – not just background information but relevant details that will be used as evidence in any conclusions reached; this involves professional judgement and critical thinking to decide what detail is relevant and what is superfluous. Although social workers often talk about their own style of writing and needing to "bring the applicants alive", too much focus on description can be problematic and can lead to a loss of focus on the ultimate aim, as well as lack of trust and confidence in readers.

Explanation (Why?) – focusing on why the information is important and included.

Whose view is being reported and on what basis? Are there any possible contrasting explanations or perspectives? Are there possible links between sources and explanations?

Hypothesising is one way to work out what detail to include; it involves articulating possible explanations about a situation and then testing them out on the basis of the evidence collected or are in the process of collecting, and making causal links.

Evaluation (So what?) – So what does this information tell us about this person’s suitability to adopt, now and into the future, and about their learning, development and support needs. A key part of written analysis or evaluation is making claims – a statement asserting something to be true or accurate. A claim needs to be based on evidence; what counts as evidence are the careful descriptions and explanations you provide. If they are based on insufficient, irrelevant, or vague description, any claims made will not be convincing and may affect the outcome of the report.

When thinking about evaluation in our reports, we also need to think about whether we use external sources e.g. research and theory, particularly if we need to justify the use of certain terms or received wisdom. And we need to think about including our own professional voice more; using our professional insight, knowledge, and careful weighing up of a situation based on evidence, is essential.

Recommendation (And so) – the purpose of analysis is to lead to recommending statements; any recommendation must be presented as a logical consequence of the evidence provided. (adapted from iriss.org.uk)

The framework recognises that families continue to learn and grow and shift in their thinking and in response to new circumstances, and that there is likely to always be some areas that could be strengthened at different stages – by training, experience, further research etc. There is also recognition that adoption support is a normative part of being an adoptive family and that as practitioners we need to be willing and able to recognise the huge complexity of the task, to “hold” the family and be their secure base at whatever stage of their journey and regardless of our designation.

As assessing social workers in adoption, we need to be clear when there are issues that cause sufficient concern to cease the assessment and be clear in the recording of our decision making when making a recommendation not to proceed. The framework will support this.

This has taken us back to basics – incredibly useful and very positive, it will be a huge help with the complex cases coming in at the moment.

”

It is a tool I can see us using all the time when a social worker finds themselves feeling unsure how to move forward or feels stuck with a family.

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The framework gave the social worker clarity and confidence in the work they would carry out with the family, and it helped me as a manager to structure discussions with the social worker to ensure we focused on the key information needed to evidence their thinking and analyse this.

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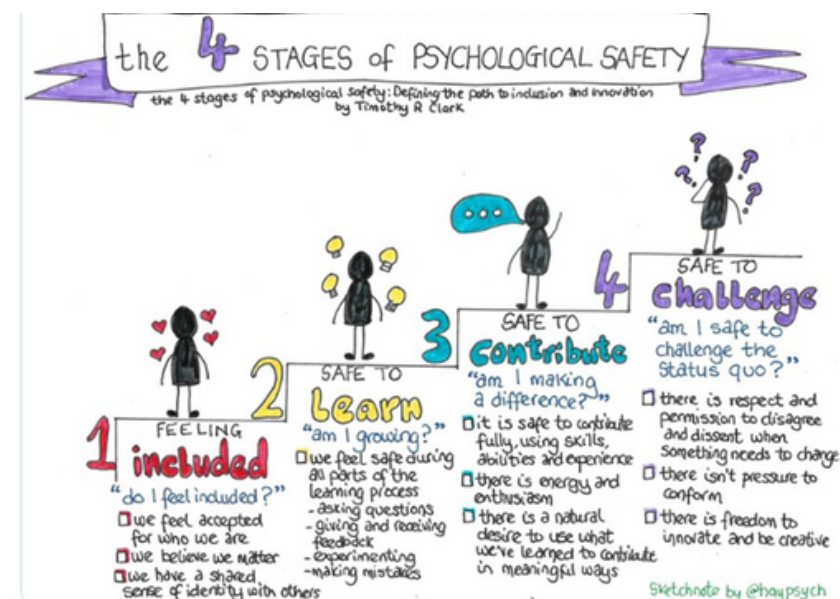
Our Role as Assessors and Supporters

As practitioners, we are always mindful of the ethical principles that underpin our work with families; those of respect, professional integrity, accuracy, and social justice. Our thoughtful use of language which avoids labelling and stereotyping; justified decisions and accuracy that take account of the broader context and enables honest and direct discussion and sharing; and critical reflection that openly values people's lived experiences, are essential.

The term vulnerability can be problematic as it tends to signal a lack of resilience, resourcefulness and strength. However, it is necessary for us to embrace and reckon with the fact that we are all a mix of vulnerabilities and strengths, and by accepting this we allow the people we assess, approve and support to be open about their limitations, challenges and emotions. Vulnerability involves acknowledging when we don't have all the answers, being able to vocalise that, and being willing to seek co-produced solutions with others.

It is important that we provide prospective adopters, and be provided with ourselves, psychological safety as this is essential in helping people feel secure and capable – to feel included as an important part of the team around the child; to feel safe to learn and not always get it right without feeling judged; to feel safe to contribute and challenge without feeling blamed. We cannot expect people to be open and honest with us unless we create an environment of trust, enable our relationships with applicants to develop at a pace which enables that trust to develop, and build relationships where people feel safe.

We play a fundamental role not only in helping adoptive applicants understand what adoption is and the realities of caring for children, but also in creating an atmosphere and culture where people can feel psychologically safe; where people feel secure and capable of changing their behaviour in response to challenges but also where they are comfortable to show themselves honestly without fear of negative consequences. We need to be the applicants' and adopters' safe and secure base as we ask them to be the child's; finding solutions is a collective responsibility.



The Framework

There are 5 Adoption Qualities and Skills headings with an overview of what each means:

1. Emotional Warmth and Availability
2. Empathy and Acceptance
3. Self-awareness, and an understanding of their inner working model and identity
4. Self-efficacy and Resilience
5. Access to, and Openness to support

These qualities and skills have been agreed in consultation with a cohort of experienced adoption professionals, drawing on the knowledge and experience within adoption teams across Wales. We have taken into account messages from research and Child Practice Reviews, the voices of adoptive parents, and adopted young people and adults. We have also considered the recent survey in Wales (NAS, 2024) identifying characteristics of successful adoptive families.

The expectation is that adoptive applicants would be able to demonstrate and evidence all 5 Qualities and Skills.

Under each heading, there are **Key issues to explore and consider** and **Suggested resources** that might be useful in gathering information and testing hypothesis although we are mindful that providing more or better “tools” does not necessarily foster critical thinking. Rather, the focus needs to be on facilitating thinking skills in practice, on an individual basis, within supervision and peer discussion, with whole organisational commitment and support.

Having said this, there is a commitment to complete a mapping exercise of assessment tools in current use across Wales with the aim of updating and creating new resources that can be accessed from a central hub. When this is complete, the framework can be updated accordingly.

It is also now well recognised that too much emphasis on assessment as a series of bureaucratic processes is not conducive to delivering a ‘child centred system’ (Munro 2011). Whilst we have provided some questions framed around key issues, we are very conscious that these should be for guidance only and to encourage critical thinking rather than providing an exhaustive list or set process to follow.

As part of the resources that accompany the framework, there will be a blank word template which the assessor can use with each assessment to help with drafting and critical thinking.

SEE: HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK

Implementation and use

Assessors will have access to training to support the implementation of the framework. This will include an anonymised case study that will be used as part of the learning activity to populate the Quality & Skills template, although this comes with the caveat that a case study will not be able to provide a comprehensive and holistic view of applicants nor cover all the issues likely to be faced in assessments. Practitioner discussion on the case study will be captured during the training, and following the training, each attendee will receive a populated Quality and Skills template based on their discussion and agreement.

The training will also explore which areas of the PAR information from the framework might best sit.

These are the things we see making a difference time and time again with children and families in the adoption support arena.

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I have seen that adoptive parents who are able to be vulnerable themselves and hold lots of points of views in mind at the same time and show empathy towards them all - the child, birth parents and especially themselves - seem to be able to adapt, cope and at times find joy in the ups and downs of parenting an adopted child.

”

I've noticed so much how it isn't a set of strategies that make adoption successful, but the way adoptive parents are as a result of their experiences, hopes, dreams and responses. A parent who can truly accept a child for who they are, with genuine warmth, love and resilience in the face of challenges, is what makes the ultimate difference in how that child grows up and how that key attachment relationship develops.

”

Adoption Qualities and Skills Framework

1. Emotional warmth and Availability

The quality of parenting and the nature of the home environment play a vital role in altering the trajectory of children's emotional, behavioural and social outcomes.... Warm parenting that is sensitive, nurturing and responsive is associated with better outcomes for children. (Paine et al. 2020) [Charting the trajectories of adopted children's emotional and behavioural problems: The impact of early adversity and post adoptive parental warmth](#)

We know that the best environment for children's healthy emotional development is one in which they can take for granted that nurture, comfort and protection are readily available from caregivers when needed. This provides a secure base for exploration and allows children to begin to trust in themselves and others.

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/centre-for-research-on-children-and-families/secure-base-model/uses-of-the-model>

- Ability to build connections with people
- Ability to be sensitive, nurturing and responsive and set the right tone of the parent child relationship that fosters cognitive abilities, capacity for self-regulation and good social skills
- Ability to demonstrate their feelings to others in appropriate ways including showing and receiving affection, providing and receiving comfort
- Ability to be physically and emotionally available to the child
- Ability to listen
- Ability and willingness to play and be with a child
- Ability to remain physically and emotionally present even when triggered
- Ability to create opportunities for self-esteem and confidence building

Key issues to explore and consider	Suggested resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do they describe relationships with their partner/ wider family/ community? What kind of language do they use?• Do they enjoy being with other people and enjoy co-operation with them? Can they give examples of co-operative relationships?• Are they flexible in their thinking about others?• How do we feel when we visit their home or are in their company? How do they make us feel? What is their body language? Do they have a sense of humour that is sensitive to others?	

- How do referees talk about them? Does this fit with how they see themselves? How do they feel they deal with challenges/ conflict/ how do they repair/ what roles do they take?
- How do referees comment on their ability to listen and respond to others?
- What do they understand by physical availability?
- Do they have space and time in their lives and are they realistic in their expectations of themselves and a child/children regarding this? Do they understand the long-term impact of early harm and lengthy timescales involved in recover? Are there any financial implications that need to be considered?
- How do referees comment on above?
- What do they understand by emotional availability?
- Are they preoccupied with something unresolved which is overwhelming?
- How do they talk about past trauma and what emotions do they show when doing so?
- Do they still have the capacity outside thinking about their own loss or trauma to still be playful, available and responsive?
- How do referees talk about how they are now and how they think trauma has affected them?

2. Empathy and Acceptance

What is Empathy?

Perspective taking: the ability to take to the perspective of another person or recognise their perspective as their truth

Staying out of judgement

Recognising emotion in other people and communicating that

Empathy is feeling with people; it fuels connection. [Brené Brown on Empathy](#)

In order to restore or develop their self-esteem, children need caregivers who can accept them for who they are, for both their strengths and their difficulties and regardless of their differences or personalities. This level of acceptance will enable caregivers to identify and support their child's talents and interests, helping the child to fulfil potential and feel good about himself. <https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/centre-for-research-on-children-and-families/secure-base-model/uses-of-the-model>

Cultural and racial identity are fundamental aspects of human existence, and any attempts to overlook or suppress them may inadvertently perpetuate harm..... The absence of supporting a child's cohesive and positive sense of identity and inadequacy of racial socialisation can contribute to the adoptee's sense of confusion and identity struggles. AFDiT. [Transracial Adoption Framework](#)

- Ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes and imagine their lived experience
- Ability to accept that others might feel things differently, and to not judge
- Ability to notice another person's feelings, to recognise vulnerability in others and offer opportunities to connect
- Ability to accept their own journey and how this influenced their expectations of parenting
- Ability to accept that they have limitations and vulnerabilities
- Ability to accept the child as they are and the capacity to understand and holistically support their identity.
- Ability to understand a child's behaviour in the context of their experiences
- Ability to be curious and questioning
- Ability to accept birth family and others' important to the child
- Ability to accept professionals' involvement/ advice and guidance
- Capacity for forgiveness – of self, the child, the birth family.

Key issues to explore and consider	Suggested resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have fixed ideas of what parenting will look like and how their family will operate? • How do they feel about caring for a child they don't love immediately? Are they able to consider and articulate that this child might not be the child they expected? • Are they able to demonstrate acceptance for their current circumstances? • Are they in tune with others? How do they talk about others' emotions? • Do their responses take account of other perspectives? • Can they consider that their partner might think differently about parenting and be willing to listen to them? • Are they able to think about and imagine what parenting a traumatised child might be like and are their views realistic ones? This might include being hit, spat at, shouted at by a child who is terrified and grieving and confused. If not, what support might help? • Are they able to accept that the child might not be ready or able to commit themselves emotionally for some time when their new family is unknown to them? • Do they demonstrate understanding of a child's behaviour as the language of their experience not a personal response to them? Do they recognise that low self-esteem and sense of shame might be masked by boasting, lying, unwillingness to take part, passive compliance etc. Do they recognise that their own response will be directly influenced by how they think and feel about a child's behaviour? Do they understand that a child might need age-appropriate independence whilst simultaneously also have younger needs to be met? How would they do this? • Can they set boundaries but also negotiate, give choices and compromise? • Are they able to accept others autonomy and identity? Do they understand how a child's name fits with this? • Are they able and willing to explore and accept a child's past and their role in helping them make sense of it? 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you assess their racial and cultural consciousness and intentionality? Transracial Adoption Framework Do they have non judgemental attitudes and do they have the mindset, skills and capacity to mitigate risks and nurture strengths if the child placed with them has a different racial, ethnic or cultural background to them? Are they able to carefully consider the extra challenges of this and can they make an active commitment to equip themselves and the child to navigate challenges in a healthy way? How willing are they to collaborate with birth parents to better understand and celebrate a child's heritage, nurture a child's sense of belonging and self acceptance?• What is their view of a child's birth family and has this shifted at all during the process? Do they have a comfortable and realistic view of the strengths and limitations of their birth family? Can they accept something that might be challenging / counterintuitive to them and trust this even when this goes against their natural instinct? | |
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3. Self-awareness, and an understanding of their inner working model and their identity

We are all products of our experience. Many of us are affected by past experiences and unresolved issues that influence the way we feel, present and respond to others. The capacity to reflect on the development of our own inner working model helps us better understand our responses and can guide us to creating the necessary foundations for secure and loving relationships with others, including our children.

Parenting from the Inside Out: how a deeper self-understanding can help you raise children who thrive. Daniel Seigal and Mary Hartzell. 2014.

Caring for a troubled child can elicit a range of strong and often mixed feelings in the caregiver and it is important that these are acknowledged and discussed. Strong feelings in the caregiver may link to past or current relationships, but if feelings are overwhelming they can disable the caregiver just as they may disable the child.

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/centre-for-research-on-children-and-families/secure-base-model/uses-of-the-model>

- Ability to describe formative experiences and explore contribution to their own identity
- Ability to manage their own emotions and understand the emotions of others around them
- Ability to be reflective and explore one's own behaviour, thoughts and feelings
- Ability to talk about feelings and describe them, even difficult ones
- Ability to recognise the impact of their own presentation on others
- Ability and willingness to be vulnerable themselves
- Ability to understand and accept the inevitable impact that adoptive parenting will have on them, their relationships, and all aspects of their life
- Capacity for good emotional regulation even when triggered
- Ability to manage conflict and be flexible
- Ability and willingness to repair and re-attune

Key issues to explore and consider	Suggested resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A person's affect is one of the largest tools in communication and social interactions and has significant implications for a child's ability to "read" their parents and learn about themselves. What is their affect i.e. their outward expression of feelings and emotions? How do they present to you i.e. tone of voice, body language? If co-operation at any point is lacking, what might that be telling us?	

- How are they described by others?
- Are they able to describe their own narrative cohesively?
Are they able to recognise how their experiences shaped them?
- Can they reflect on and recognise how trauma and loss have affected them? Are they able to contemplate and accept that they are likely to be triggered by parenting? Are they able to be honest with themselves and their assessor about elements that might become unmanageable eg compulsive behaviours; how would they recognise this and how would they manage this?
- How do they talk about their emotions? Can they talk about a range of feelings and emotions without becoming uncomfortable or shutting down?
- Can they identify their attitudes, values and expectations about the world around them which informs their thoughts and actions?
- Are they someone who needs to be in control or find it hard to be in control?
- Do they show evidence of patience?
- How do they manage conflict? How do they feel with being challenged, or with rejections?

4. Self efficacy and Resilience

If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning. **Mahatma Gandhi**

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations and is often associated with traits like autonomy, self confidence and a proactive approach to learning and exploration.

After people become convinced they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly rebound from setbacks.

By sticking it out through tough times, they emerge stronger from adversity. **Albert Bandura**

- Ability to approach a task with confidence and set realistic goals
- Ability to adapt to circumstances and changes
- Ability and willingness to be creative and use humour appropriately
- Ability to co-operate with others, including the child, wider family, professionals, their social network
- Ability to manage stress
- Ability to be physically, mentally and emotionally agile
- Ability to recognise the importance of stability

Key issues to explore and consider	Suggested resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do they have a range of life experiences they have learnt from and can draw on?• Can they provide good, convincing examples of feeling effective and competent? Would they describe themselves as calm and considered, practical and pragmatic?• How do others describe them?• Is there good evidence of resilience? What does this look like and how would they describe this?• Are they confident in their approach with others, and to tasks/situations they are faced with?• Are they curious, open to learning more? Are they proactive and do they have drive?• Do they have good self-esteem? Are they able to describe situations when their self-esteem was low and they lacked faith in their abilities? How did this manifest and what did they learn from this?	

- How do they take criticism? Are they overly sensitive to others judgement of them?
- Do they have a good sense of humour and are they able to use this appropriately and sensitively? Can they think of scenarios they have diffused a situation through humour?
- Can they think of situations when they might have to advocate for their child? Can they imagine how they might do this?
- Are they able to recognise this as a time of growth/ change/ challenge in their life? Are they able to identify and describe how this makes them feel?
- Are they willing to “practice” what their response might be to various scenarios, and adjust their response if necessary?
- Have they been able to consider all eventualities including the possibility of not being able to care for their child and contingency plans?
- Are they able to keep others “on side” and be open of different ways of doing things and approaches?
- Do they have realistic expectations of themselves and others? Are there examples when they have taken on too much, too fast and what have they learnt from this? Have they been able to adapt?
- How would others comment on these areas?

5. Access to, and openness to support

The major evolution in adoption support in the last fifteen years has been the acknowledgement that adoption support is an expected part of being an adoptive family. Asking for support is no longer a reflection that ‘this family can’t cope’ but rather ‘this family is undertaking a very complex parenting task and is likely to require support’

(Ottoway et al 2014; Rushton and Dance, 2002; Pennington, 2012 in NAS Adoption Support Good Practice Guide)

It would appear that in recruiting adopters, it may be helpful to place emphasis on evidence of the ability to work collaboratively with others and ability to seek advice and support. It is reasonable to expect that realistic expectations would be more likely in those with this approach. They also appear to go hand in hand with personal attributes of warmth, empathy, flexibility and openness. (NAS 2024)

- Ability to recognise themselves as part of a wider network of family and friends, and be willing and able to access support from them
- Ability to see themselves as part of the team around the child and work collaboratively
- Ability to be open about their experiences and the reality of parenting
- Ability to acknowledge they won’t have all the answers, and be able to vocalise this
- Ability to accept advice, guidance and support, and seek co-produced solutions with others, including professional colleagues

Key issues to explore and consider	Suggested resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is in their network and does it include relationships of varying lengths? What evidence is there of the applicant’s ability to maintain relationships, even through periods of stress or change? • Are there examples of resilience within their network? Is there evidence of co-operative relationships or working towards compromise in the applicant’s current life – within partnerships, wider family, or community? • Can they identify people around them who will offer support? Have they had detailed discussions with these people and know their views? Can they describe what this support will look like? Can they provide good, convincing examples when they have asked for help, taken advice, or had to share deeply personal things with someone in their network? How did they feel about this? 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who are their referees and why were they chosen? What do they tell us? Do they know the applicants sufficiently well to see when things might not be going as expected, and have the confidence to step forward in a sensitive and empathic way whilst also be mindful of safeguarding issues?• What is/has been the applicant's capacity to be collaborative and co-operative within the assessment process itself? How did they present and engage in preparation training? Have they met other adopters and what value do they place on peer support?• Are they able to be open and honest with their social worker about what they are feeling e.g. the process, their relationship, others, expectations? What is their relationship with you like?• Do they, and you, feel that they would be able to be honest about their feelings post placement without feeling scared, shame or disapproval? | |
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How to use the framework

The **blank Adoption Quality and Skills template** is designed as a live tool for practitioners to be used in conjunction with the Adoption Qualities and Skills framework and guidance (and alongside the CoramBAAF. Prospective Adopter's Report(PAR)(Wales) and guidance notes (or similar template and guidance)), in assessment and supervision discussions.

The expectation is that adoptive applicants would be able to demonstrate and evidence all 5 Qualities and Skills:

1. Emotional Warmth and Availability
2. Empathy and Acceptance
3. Self-awareness, and an understanding of their inner working model and identity
4. Self-efficacy and Resilience
5. Access to, and Openness to support

Under each Quality and Skill, there are 3 sections. There is no need to write detailed narratives in each section, but it could be used to help the process of critical thinking as the assessment progresses, to help synthesise and analyse data, evaluate and draw conclusions and ultimately capture this well within the PAR or Brief Report to make it an analytical and robust document. It can also be used to clarify and confirm decision making when there is sufficient concern to cease an assessment.

Section 1

Assessor's reflections, to include brief bullet points on key information and thinking around whether the applicant's have comfortably met each quality and skill. It is important to consider the **context** that influence individual's behaviour, experience and interactions, as well as the interconnectedness between each below:

- ✓ **Cultural, religious and historical** - values and belief systems that shape individuals' perspectives and behaviours; cultural practices and rituals can influence social norms and expectations; past events and historical narratives that shape memory and identity.
- ✓ **Social / Economic** - Family structure, roles, and relationships which play a crucial role in shaping an individual's identity and behaviour; Community and Social Networks which impact social behaviour and mental well-being; socioeconomic status which affects access to resources, opportunities and lifestyle choices.
- ✓ **Educational and linguistic** - including digital literacy, that influence learning experiences
- ✓ **Health** – physical and psychological wellbeing that impacts quality of life and capacity, behaviour and interactions

Section 2

Potential challenges/ Opportunities, and how this will be discussed with applicants. Again, brief bullet points will be sufficient.

1. Are there significant concerns/gaps that would cease the assessment?
2. Are there any gaps/ evidence is limited or weak?
3. Have applicant/s' vulnerabilities been honestly and thoroughly explored? What has this told you?
4. Is there opportunity for growth and further development?
5. Any recommendations/ advice, and how might this be addressed / be supported – during assessment/ ongoing? How will this be reviewed?

Section 3

Critical thinking and written analysis – helping analyse the information and evidence collected, refining, hypothesising and refining more.

Assessors might find it helpful to populate this section in a narrative style, taking account of the What? Why? So what? And so? principles in relation to the quality and skill being considered and explored; they could then use the refined/ final version of this within their PAR.

Description – What information do I have which should be included?

Think about what descriptive detail is relevant and necessary that will be used as evidence in any conclusions reached. Does it contain sufficient detail to give a clear account whilst also being concise? Is there any language you have used that is evaluative or judgmental? If you have used an evaluative word or phrase, have you included sufficient detail to justify its use?

Explanation - Why is the detail included important?

What are the possible explanations about a situation and how have you tested them out on the basis of the evidence you've collected or in the process of collecting? What details have you left out and why? Whose views is being reported and on what basis? Are there any links between sources or any conflicting perspectives?



Evaluation - So what? What claims can you make based on evidence you've gathered (the careful descriptions and explanations) ie so what does this tell us about the applicant/s' capacity and suitability to adopt a child/ children? Have you appropriately identified any outstanding areas of development and support and how these will be met?

Are you being "cautious" in your judgement or "explicit" in your claims? Think about the language of your claim (John is.....or John appears...). Is the evidence sufficient, relevant, non vague, is there enough nuance? Have you used external sources where necessary?

Is your professional voice heard/ your professional opinion clearly stated? ("it was considered/ it was agreed" – who considered/ who agreed?). Being 'subjective' in expressing an unsubstantiated view is not acceptable but being 'subjective' by bringing your professional insight, knowledge, careful weighing up of a situation based on evidence, is essential ("I consider that..../ on the basis of.....I have reached the conclusion, having considered the evidence in relation to..... that.....").

Will the reader be able to identify your summary evaluation and the basis on which it is made? Are there things you could do to sharpen the evaluation?

Recommendation – And so? Be straightforward and clear.

Recommendations must be presented as a logical consequence of evidence provided. Have you provided sufficient evidence to justify recommendations made? Is there further action/ support needed? For who and by whom? Do you have a situation where a recommendation cannot be made at this point? (adapted from iriss.org.uk)



Adoption Qualities and Skills Practitioner tool

*see framework and guidance for reference

Name of applicant/s			
Name of assessor			
Date assessment started			
1. Emotional warmth and Availability			
Assessor's reflection		Potential challenges/Opportunities	
Critical thinking and analysis – What? Why? So what? And so?			
2. Empathy and Acceptance			
Assessor's reflection		Potential challenges/Opportunities	
Critical thinking and analysis – What? Why? So what? And so?			
3. Self awareness, and an understanding of their inner working model and their identity			
Assessor's reflection		Potential challenges/Opportunities	
Critical thinking and analysis – What? Why? So what? And so?			

4. Self efficacy and Resilience	
Assessor's reflection	Potential challenges/Opportunities
Critical thinking and analysis – What? Why? So what? And so?	
5. Access to, and openness to support	
Assessor's reflection	Potential challenges/Opportunities
Critical thinking and analysis – What? Why? So what? And so?	

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National Adoption Service for Wales resources

Good Practice Guides (2020) Contact; Transitions and Early Support; Working with Birth Parents; Adoption Support. Trauma Nurture Timeline and Understanding the Child Day Resources for Professionals. <https://www.adoptcymru.com/good-practice-guides>

Life Journey work archive <https://www.adoptcymru.com/life-journey>

Celebrating and learning from adopted children and their families who are doing well: Summary and analysis of results (2024) <https://adoptcymru.com/app/uploads/2025/02/Success-factors-in-adoption.pdf>

Safeguarding for Children Placed with Prospective Adoptive Parents

<https://adoptcymru.com/app/uploads/2025/02/Safeguarding-for-children-placed-with-prospective-adoptive-parents-E.pdf>

Procedure for changing a child's name at adoption

https://adoptcymru.com/app/uploads/2025/02/Changing-a-Childs-Name_en-GB.pdf

All Wales Adoption Policies and Procedures <https://adoptionapp.wales/pdf/277>

All Wales Safeguarding Procedures <https://www.safeguarding.wales/en/>

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