

The Umbrella Programme



**Empowering
Young People
on Their Journey
to Adulthood**

HANDBOOK

To Accompany the Throughcare Preparation Pack:

Looking to the Future:

With Skills for Life!



Leonardo
da Vinci

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Background

The Umbrella Programme is a 3-year Pilot Project funded by the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci Programme for education, training & employment.



The programme has run for 3 years from December 1997 to December 2000, and has had seven partner organisations involved, from five different European countries.

Partners



Hogeschool Windesheim, Zwolle, **Netherlands**



Kaarina Institute of Social Studies, Kaarina, **Finland**



Kibble Education & Care Centre, Paisley, **Scotland**



Lauste Family Rehabilitation Centre, Turku, **Finland**



Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus, Berlin, **Germany**



Turku Social Services, Turku, **Finland**



Westerlundiska Gymnasiet, Enköping, **Sweden**

The Project

The Umbrella Programme has developed a range of products for use in social care organisations that work with vulnerable young people, and as part of vocational training and higher education courses for people who will go into the child care or social care field.

These products have been produced following the joint efforts and commitment from a variety of professionals, practitioners and students involved with each of the partner organisations. The project has combined knowledge and experience from a range of backgrounds in both the academic and practice fields.

The Products

These are the outcomes of the Umbrella Programme:

- 'Looking to the Future: with Skills for Life' - A Throughcare Preparation Pack
- 'Empowering Young People on Their Journey to Adulthood' - Handbook.
- 'Journal 2000' – Vocational Training & Higher Education Study Modules

More Information

For further information on the Umbrella Project, it's Products, and the Partners, please look up details at the project's website at:

<http://www.kso.fi/umbrella/>

The Umbrella Programme in Context

The Umbrella partners originally came together in 1995 to look at ideas for trans-European projects that build on links between universities, vocational training schools, social care organisations and social services. The partners all shared common interests in supporting young people who are looked after in residential care and for the development of under-graduate and vocational training for social care.

The Umbrella Programme was devised to explore practices in each country, to develop new approaches and to further improve existing methods. The aim of the project was to develop a programme of independent living skills for young people at risk of social exclusion.

It had become increasingly obvious over the past few years that many young people leaving care across Europe are not as well prepared for this transition to adult living as they could be. As a result, care leavers have tended to be over represented in a number of social deprivation indices. For example, higher numbers of young people from care backgrounds are likely to be homeless or live in poor accommodation, be unemployed, addicted to drugs, in poor health or more socially isolated than their peers in the overall population.

Recognising these outcomes for young people, the Umbrella Programme was set up to develop and disseminate a set of resources to help prepare young people for leaving care. The project has also developed new teaching methods for vocational training and higher education in social care, so that workers can be better equipped to support young people.

Introduction

The Handbook

This Handbook is the information and reference book to accompany the Umbrella Programme's 'Skills for Life' Pack.

The aim of the Handbook is to provide a range of practice examples relating to the empowerment of vulnerable young people, which is involved in the throughcare preparation work within the 'Skills for Life' Pack.

This information is primarily aimed at people who will be supporting young people with their throughcare preparation. Throughout the Handbook, the word 'worker' is often used, but this could also be applied to other people such as foster carers, teachers, students, tutors etc.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack

The 'Skills for Life' Pack has a structured approach and is a two-way learning and sharing process with both young people and workers or carers having an input.

All the sections covered in the pack are relevant for young people and are important to know and learn as they grow up. The structures are flexible, so that each module can be carried out alone or in a series with others. There is no pressure on a young person to complete all sections in one attempt, as there are no time limits on carrying out the work. It is up to the worker or tutor to work *together* with the young person to decide a suitable pace and focus.

The modules in the 'Skills for Life' Pack start with many of the basic things for a young person to learn or explore. There are no long lists of questions with just "yes" or "no" answers, as the idea is to encourage young people to think about their responses. If a young person is faced with a list of "no" responses to things that they can't do or don't know, this can be very demoralising for them and can lead to low self-esteem. Instead, the 'Skills for Life' Pack is aimed at what a young person CAN achieve and what they CAN learn to do. This gives the 'Skills for Life' Pack a much more positive focus, which can help to build self-esteem and confidence in achieving even the smallest goals.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack provides a framework for throughcare preparation and is just a starting point.

The development of the 'Skills for Life' Pack should be on-going. At any time, new sections can be developed and added, as a continuation of an existing theme or as an entirely new section. Organisations should actively encourage this continuous development, as throughcare needs may change and new ideas may arise.

The Young Person's Folder

The goal of the young person's folder is about recording achievements, in a positive way.

Its aim is to overcome the reinforcement of further failure for young people who may have already had many negative experiences in life. Whilst carrying out activities in the 'Skills for Life' Pack, any achievement, however big or small, should be included in the young person's folder.

General Principles

What is 'THROUGH-CARE'?

Throughcare is about the on-going preparation and support for young people who are approaching adulthood and who may soon be moving on to live more independently.

It is not possible to put an age on when throughcare support and preparation should begin and end. Ideally, this should depend on the individual young person and their individual needs. It can depend on a young person's own circumstances, their level of maturity and emotional development. Young people may be leaving residential care, foster care, hospital, a penal institution or some other form of supportive environment.

Generally, if throughcare preparation and life skills development starts at a younger age, then this is better than leaving it until it is too late for a young person to develop a range of independent living skills. Throughcare preparation should start in small steps, at a young age, because when a young person reaches 15 or 16 years old, this can often be too late for a lot of preparation and skills development work to take place.

The continuity of support usually starts with the establishment or home where the young person is living, but there should also be the encouragement of active involvement and support from the young person's family and school. Emotional support and encouraging the development of a young person's personality is just as important a practical help and assistance. Adults need to understand and listen to young people's feelings about moving on from where they live. Workers too may also have thoughts and feelings they may need to express as a young person is leaving their care. The young person should feel that they will not be alone when they come to leave the place where they live. It is important that they also feel emotionally ready to move on.

An establishment should try to create a positive throughcare culture and approach, where young people are prepared and clear plans are made, well in advance of any move.

For some young people leaving school and leaving the place where they live can happen all at once. Young people should be given sufficient time and support to learn to cope with these two big events in their lives. An understanding of adolescence is required, including knowledge of what it means to be an adolescent. This can be explored as a group (such as a work team or a class), and can help to identify what is 'normal' teenage behaviour, to be expected at this stage in a young person's life.

Why have 'THROUGH-CARE'?

Throughcare can address young people's needs as they grow up, and help to prevent the institutionalisation of young people who have lived in some form of care.

Throughcare involves the development of life skills that most other young people would be gradually developing within 'normal' family life. Young people who are living in foster care or residential care can often go through many changes and unsettled periods, which can mean that they do not have chance to develop day-to-day life skills within a secure and settled environment in which to grow.

As young people in care go through adolescence and approach adulthood, they are often expected to have to leave where they are living at 16 or 17 years of age. As many young people approach this time in their lives, some young people may decide to move on to some

other form of institutional care or regime. For example, many young people go on to join the armed forces, possibly because this is an environment in which they are used to coping in, with its rules, discipline, daily routines and group living.

Some young people may have never had to, or been given the opportunity, to make many decisions in their lives. Therefore, the prospect of having to move away from where they are living, which involves making decisions and taking responsibility can often be a frightening prospect. Throughcare support, in a planned and on-going way, can help to address young people's fears and worries at an early stage. It can also ensure that young people are equipped with the skills that are necessary as they approach adult life.

Aftercare

This is the continuing support and guidance for an individual young person who has left care or a supported living environment.

It can also mean supporting young people in practical matters such as setting up home, budgeting skills, paying bills, finding employment, and offer encouragement for developing their own social networks.

Ideally, some aftercare should continue to be offered by the workers or carers at the place where the young person has just moved from. These people are usually the ones with whom the young person has already built relationships and feels comfortable with. Allowances need to be made to try to allow workers and carers some time to keep in touch with young people. This can often be difficult, especially as there are always new children who arrive in their place, but it should still be seen as important.

Some organisations may have an aftercare team who will be responsible for ensuring a young person has sufficient aftercare support. Ideally, these workers should be able to get to know a young person several months before they are due to move out of the establishment or home where they live. Informal opportunities should be created to help build a relationship with a young person, such as having meals together, going shopping or leisure activities.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack

General Principles

The 'Skills for Life' Pack can provide the means to explore a young person's potential and can encourage them to develop new skills.

It can be a helpful way of starting off important discussions with a young person, which can look beyond a young person's current interests or present living environment.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack should be seen as an extra set of 'tools' to help workers or carers when looking after young people. Some of the areas in each section may already be taking place within an establishment. The important factor is that the 'Skills for Life' Pack ensures that few areas are over-looked or forgotten and all young people's achievements can be clearly recorded and seen in their folder. As workers and carers, we all have a responsibility to help prepare young people with the skills and knowledge they need for adult life.

One of the principles behind the 'Skills for Life' Pack is for preparation for more independent living.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack has been designed specifically to empower and assist young people's life skills development, but could equally be adapted to suit other client groups e.g. adults with learning difficulties, adults leaving prison, homeless people and generally people who are socially excluded or in crisis.

Such preparation will help young people to learn to cope with and be better prepared for the 'outside world'. It can be too late for many young people to start learning life skills at 16 years old. Such throughcare preparation needs to start much earlier, at least from 13 or 14 years old. Young people may ask why they need to know these things. It is about learning, so that they can be less dependent on other people while building up their own knowledge base.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack is adaptable and can be tailored to meet individual's needs and address specific problems or difficulties.

The young person, with encouragement and support, should ideally lead the work. The 'Skills for Life' Pack may also be able to help young people to consider questions about their own identity, such as: Why do I think the way I do? What do I know or don't know?

The 'Skills for Life' Pack can provide a system for ensuring that young people can have the every day learning experiences that may not always be automatically present when living in an establishment. By being asked questions in a certain way, it can be possible to learn and discover new things. Maybe a young person was more knowledgeable than workers first thought, or maybe it is discovered that a young person is unable to do certain basic tasks.

General Advice

The 'Skills for Life' Pack should ideally be used in one-to-one situations, but it may also sometimes be used with groups.

Young people should not use the 'Skills for Life' Pack completely by themselves, as the support and guidance of a supportive adult, such as keyworker, tutor, mentor, or carer is required.

Equally, a worker should not go ahead and complete the 'Skills for Life' Pack for a young person without the young person being actively involved. Where possible, a young person should be able to have a choice of people with whom he or she can carry out different sections.

Specific areas of need can be addressed and skills can be developed. Flexibility will be necessary in order to tailor pieces of work to an individual's level of literacy, interest etc. A young person can begin with any section, as it is not necessary to just start at the beginning and work their way through every single section in turn. It is up to the keyworker to assess which section (or sections) are the most important to start with. This should also be discussed and decided with the young person. It is also not vital to complete all of the sections in the 'Skills for Life' Pack, especially if time is limited.

The Young Person's Folder: Recording Achievements

Every time a young person completes a page in a section of the 'Skills for Life' Pack, this should be added to the young person's folder.

It is important that a young person can see the folder as belonging to him or herself. They can put any records of achievement in it, such as school reports, certificates, or photographs. Workers may wish to also add a few extra written comments of their own, to offer encouragement and promote a young person's sense of achievement. Remember that the activities in the 'Skills for Life' Pack should be photocopied or printed before the young person completes them.

The folder doesn't have to contain just the pages of the 'Skills for Life' Pack. Where it is possible, a young person could draw a picture, write something on the computer or even get photographs taken of themselves carrying out the activities. Any information that is gathered can also be included, such as information leaflets or brochures. Completing the activities in the 'Skills for Life' Pack should be fun and not just hard work. The young people should be able to see that it's for their own benefit and not just something they have to do, because they've been told to.

By building up this portfolio of achievements, it will be clear to see how a young person is progressing. Some sections may have more achievements in them than others, so this will help to assess which areas may then need more attention paid to them. It will be clearer to see where gaps may still exist, and where areas of focus may need to change. The young person will be able to see this for him or herself, and therefore be able to participate in 'self-assessment' of where they are at with their throughcare preparation.

By looking at the folder, it can be clear to see where the throughcare work has been carried out, or maybe where important areas have not been addressed.

All young people should be prepared for adult life, whether they are being looked after for 3 months or 3 years. The young person's folder can help aftercare workers to see what sort of throughcare work a young person has achieved. By looking over the folder together with a young person, this can help them to develop a rapport and see which skills a young person has developed. The achievements in the folder can be a good talking point when building relationships with a young person. It can also help the aftercare worker see exactly which areas may still need to be focused on with a young person.

It is important to praise young people, even if their achievements are very small. Workers or carers may find that some young people may not be used to hearing praise very often. The

focus of the folder should always be positive, and not contain negative comments about what a young person can't do or is not good at. It is important that young people have something to remember things by, and that this is carried on and not 'lost in time'. This is why it may be particularly important to also record young people's achievements with photographs and pictures.

Skills Needed by Workers and Carers

Before embarking on working with a young person on the 'Skills for Life' Pack, workers and carers need to be familiar with how the 'Skills for Life' Pack works.

The worker should read through each section before they begin to complete it with a young person, so that they are clear about what will be involved. They should also read the advice and guidance in the staff handbook.

Workers need to be able to set aside enough time to work with the young person on the 'Skills for Life' Pack modules. For example, if a young person is motivated and enthusiastic, ten minutes work on the 'Skills for Life' Pack could continue into half an hour or more. A young person could start to discuss and explore some areas that were not envisaged at first. A worker or carer will also need to be able to motivate young people and lead them through each chosen area. Workers may need to be pro-active in initiating activities based upon the 'Skills for Life' Pack, but should also be careful not to 'take over' or dictate the agenda for the young person.

A worker or carer must also not feel dejected or frustrated if a young person can only achieve five minutes of progress with the 'Skills for Life' Pack. For some young people, this may happen, especially as some can find it hard to focus or concentrate for long periods of time. A young person may need time to feel comfortable with the worker or the modules in the 'Skills for Life' Pack. Workers or carers may have to find imaginative ways to address areas with young people, which may not always mean sitting down at a table with them.

A worker or carer needs to be aware that different young people have different needs and abilities.

Some young people may not be able to read and write very well, and others may find it difficult to talk about things that are personal. A worker needs to know the young person and know the level of their abilities. Sometimes this may only become apparent when carrying out the activities in the 'Skills for Life' Pack. Therefore, it should not be assumed that all young people will be at the same level.

The following skills and qualities are just some that are required by the worker or carer:

<i>Patience</i>	<i>Perseverance</i>	<i>Sense of humour</i>
<i>Listening skills</i>	<i>Self-awareness</i>	<i>Awareness of others</i>
<i>Communication skills</i>	<i>Positive body language</i>	<i>Enthusiasm</i>
<i>Imagination</i>	<i>Sensitiveness</i>	<i>Understanding</i>

The worker should have some specific knowledge and understanding of the young person and should be able to form and develop working relationships, based on trust and mutual respect.

Having some shared interests may also help. A worker or carer should be able to show that they do not always have all the answers and know everything. Workers or carers may sometimes find they learn as much as the young people! Workers or carers should become

more conscious of what they are doing with young people and why. Issues around using the 'Skills for Life' Pack with young people should also regularly be discussed at team meetings, so that any ideas or suggestions for new ideas or improvements can be shared.

Workers and carers will also need to be patient, as many achievements may not happen quickly. It is important to be flexible and it may be necessary to utilise a variety of methods for learning and developing skills, such as:

<i>Writing</i>	<i>Photographs</i>	<i>Poetry</i>
<i>Drawing</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>
<i>Songs</i>	<i>Role plays</i>	<i>Games</i>

Role-playing can be a valuable method, particularly with small groups of young people. Each person can act out a particular role and scenario, in order to explore and develop social skills. The worker should ensure that a discussion takes place after the role-play, so that particular scenes or actions can be explored and reasons given. It is important for the worker to ensure that no young person is ridiculed or teased because of the role-play, and no one should be forced to do it if they do not want to.

Both workers and young people can also develop computer skills. Certain activities can be completed directly on the computer, and young people may find this more interesting to do. Instead of keeping a folder, the young person could keep his or her own 'floppy disk' of achievements.

The Environment: Setting the Tone

The right environment is also important, and it should be somewhere where there will not be too many interruptions.

It should be kept in mind that some of the sections might involve personal and confidential discussions, which other young people should not overhear. Some of the more practical sessions could take place when other young people may be around and they may become curious and interested in what is happening. This may then encourage other young people's interest in learning things through the 'Skills for Life' Pack.

Using the 'Skills for Life' Pack with young people will require at times a quiet, private environment with few distractions. It should be a safe environment, where young people can feel comfortable to talk, or be able to focus on a particular topic. It will be necessary to ensure that workers are allocated sufficient time to carry out the work with a young person. For example, some activities may involve going out to various places, seeking information or going to speak to people. Workers will need to be aware of the most appropriate times to carry out these activities.

The ideal environment for using the 'Skills for Life' Pack will be within a supportive, well-motivated team.

An organisation will need to be relatively well resourced, to allow time for the work to take place between young people and individual workers. Workers may find that young people come to see the time spent with a worker using the 'Skills for Life' Pack as being valuable, with the young person gaining individual attention. Alternatively, ideas within the 'Skills for Life' Pack could be developed into opportunities for working with groups of young people. The environment does not have to be just in a room, as young people may be more responsive and learn just as much in a variety of locations. Workers or carers could find that

some of the most useful discussions take place in the kitchen, at the supermarket, on the bus, by the sea, etc.

Training Implications

Organisations or residential establishments will find that they will need to carry out a certain degree of training for workers in order to implement the use of the 'Skills for Life' Pack.

It will also be equally helpful to clearly explain the 'Skills for Life' Pack to young people before it is introduced.

The implementation of the 'Skills for Life' Pack as a means of working with young people should be addressed at three levels:

- *Management*
- *Staff / carers*
- *Young people*

Some staff may already be enthusiastic about the principles of using the 'Skills for Life' Pack, whereas others may be more sceptical. Enthusiasm in welcoming the 'Skills for Life' Pack as a tool needs to be developed at a team level, and the positive attitudes of some staff members should be supported and encouraged.

Managers will also need to believe in the benefits of using such a system, especially if there are on-going training requirements or if extra time and resources are needed to facilitate the work.

Some education may be required, especially around the principles and responsibilities for providing throughcare and aftercare support. This can easily be combined into the overall implementation of the 'Skills for Life' Pack as a practice method.

The 'Skills for Life' Pack can also be introduced as a working method to students who may be involved in practice placements with young people. Students may find that they have more time to carry out certain activities with young people.

A young person's progress with the 'Skills for Life' Pack should be incorporated into care planning meetings and reviews of a young person's care. This can then clearly start to address a young person's throughcare and aftercare needs, as they approach a time where they will be ready to move on. It can add a positive focus to such meetings, which may become more difficult as the young person nears the time for leaving.

Practical Tips and Advice

Introduction

The following section contains a variety of practical tips and advice for workers who are using the 'Skills for Life' Pack with young people.

These notes provide additional information, to help workers guide young people through each activity in each section. The worker or carer must read the notes about a particular section or activity *before* they start to carry out the work with the young person. This will help to give suggestions or answer any possible questions that may arise during the activity.

Assessment Advice

It is important to be able to assess which areas in the 'Skills for Life' Pack are best suited to a young person's needs and which modules should be carried out first.

It is not necessary to start at module 1, of section A and proceed through each module in turn. The worker and the young person should consider together which area or areas are important and prioritise which should be addressed first.

The following questions should be considered:

- *Where are the gaps in this young person's knowledge?*
- *What skills do they need to learn and why?*
- *How much time do we have to work with this young person?*
- *Who can be carrying out the various modules with the young person?*
- *What areas are important to address first?*

The aim is to improve a young person's skills and knowledge over time, and not to rush through all the sections in a short time. There is not an obligation to complete every single module, but it is in the young person's best interest to learn as much as possible. Even if a young person has only a short time to carry out some of the modules, they should still be given the chance to learn some things that are important for them, and fill at least a few gaps in their knowledge or understanding.

It is important to encourage young people to participate in their own assessment of what their throughcare needs are.

A: SOCIAL LIFE



1. My Social Network

This section focuses on the importance of creating good social networks and the kind of people that can make up your own network of support. It tries to encourage young people living away from home to identify and maintain their existing social networks by looking at who is important in their lives. It is possible for a young person to map out significant people involved in their life.

The social network approach should be used when a young person initially enters care, to establish who their supports are. It should also be maintained and used throughout the placement to ensure that the young person never feels isolated and is always aware of someone that they can talk to or get support from.

A supportive social network is particularly significant for young people who are leaving care as research indicates that young people have difficulty coping with this major transition without adequate supports. Workers and carers should therefore help the young person to maximise potential support networks throughout their placement.

2. Family

The aim of this part is for young people and workers to gain more understanding of the young person's family background. It looks at the family members a young person sees as being important and explores some of the feelings that a young person may have about their family. Workers should be aware of and sensitive to the fact that some young people may have had difficult or upsetting experiences of family life.

This section also enables the young person to describe the different roles members have within the family i.e. biological parents or step-parents. This can be fundamental to the young person's identity formation and sense of self, and will help workers and carers to gain a clearer understanding of this.

3. Friends

This section helps a young person to look at who their friends are and how they can go about making friends. It also addresses issues around what are some of the good things about friendships and the not so good things. It can help a young person to start to think about how they make friends and keep their friendships.

It is important for workers and carers to remember that most young people make friends through school, their local neighbourhoods and through membership of special interest groups. Young people who live away from home may live and be educated within residential establishments. Workers may therefore need to use creative ways of widening opportunities for friendships to develop.

4. Visitors

For many young people, the success of living in their own place can depend on how well they deal with visitors to their new place. Many problems can be caused by young people being unable to deal effectively with unwanted visitors or by not knowing when to be more assertive with their friends.

An example is when some friends may see a young person's new flat as the place to have all-night parties, even though this could result in a young person losing their tenancy. Young people need to feel strong enough to decide who they would like to visit and when.

5. Neighbours

Getting along well with your neighbours can sometimes be difficult, but can also be helpful, especially when someone is living in their own place for the first time. This section will help young people to consider things about living next door to other people.

6. Being a Parent

Parenting is a major issue to be addressed with young people, as many young people can find themselves being parents while they are still teenagers. It is important for young people to seriously think about the impact of having a child and what being a parent means to them. This section should help them to discover more about what it really means to be a parent. Young people may also think about their own experiences of being looked after as a child by their parents or other people.

7. Leisure

This section will encourage young people to think about the hobbies and leisure activities that they enjoy doing. If young people are not very active, it may help them to start thinking about taking up new hobbies that interest them.

An important part of this section is looking at how much money they need to spend on activities. This is a way of developing budgeting skills and also encouraging young people to consider less expensive hobbies. Some young people may not be able to afford to continue with expensive hobbies once they are living independently. Others may gain a more realistic sense of how much money they may need, in order to enjoy an activity.

8. Local Area

If a young person is living in a new area, they will need to get to know where local areas of interest or importance can be found. Some of these places may be important in an emergency or they may encourage a young person to enjoy some of the facilities in their home town. It can also help a young person to learn useful map-reading skills or to develop the confidence to ask and understand directions.

It is also important for young people to maintain a sense of where they are from and the facilities available to them within their home area. It could therefore be beneficial for young people to complete this section twice, as they may return to their local community after they leave care.

9. Travelling

This section will encourage a young person to use different forms of public transport, and build up knowledge of how to travel around their local area. It also helps to look at which forms of transport will be the most affordable, especially if a young person is not going to have a lot of money to spend on travelling.

B: SCHOOL, TRAINING & WORK



1. School

The aim of this section is to promote positive images about school. A young person may need a lot of encouragement to start thinking about the positives, especially if they have had difficult, negative experiences at school. There can be something positive for a young person, even if it's something like friends or sports. A young person may start to talk about concerns or experiences that may need to be addressed, such as bullying. A worker will need to be clear about how to address such issues with a young person.

This activity explores the links between what is learnt at school, why it is useful and what it is needed for. It helps a young person to start looking at how they could use their interests and the things they are good at in the future. It can also promote self-esteem by exploring things that the young person is good at and interested in.

2. Looking to the Future

This part helps a young person look to the future, by seeing which skills and interests could be transferred to future jobs. A young person can think about full-time, part-time, voluntary, weekend or evening work. The goal is to help young people to positively look to the future. It can also help young people look at what kind of work experience or training they may be interested in.

3. Going to College

This section will encourage young people to consider going on to further education when they leave school. Some young people may not have considered going on to college, or may not think that there are any courses that will interest them. Young people should be encouraged and supported to find information on courses that will be interesting and suit their abilities.

4. Finding a Job

Looking for employment doesn't just begin when a young person has left school. This section starts by looking at the kind of jobs that a young person could try and do before they are leaving school. If a young person is able to get a weekend or evening job, this will help them to build confidence, new skills and good relations with fellow workers.

The next stage helps young people to start thinking about the kind of jobs that they are interested in. They will learn about where the best places are to look for employment and to get help when looking for a job. It also helps them to practice telephone skills and get the information they need.

5. Writing a C.V.

An important part of applying for jobs is having a well presented Curriculum Vitae or C.V. This document clearly outlines a young person's education, qualifications, work experience, personal qualities and interests. An example has been provided with all the headings that should be used. Young people should be supported in thinking about what important information they should write on their C.V. This can be produced on a computer, to give an attractive layout.

6. Applications Forms

This section encourages young people to practice completing an application form. It should familiarise young people with the types of questions that they have to answer and the information that they need to give to a prospective employer. An example of an application form has been provided, although it is also useful to gather several different examples. With practice, a young person will learn how to complete an application form and will become more confident. Remember that neat handwriting and taking your time are important!

7. Interviews

It is important for young people to know what to expect and to be prepared if they have to attend an interview. First impressions are always important, so this section looks at what you should wear and helps young people to think about the kind of questions an interviewer may ask them. It also encourages young people to practice attending an interview. Maybe they could take it in turns at playing the role of interviewer and asking each other questions. It is also useful to ask how people felt after an interview and to give feedback on the person being interviewed. This feedback can possibly be used to improve things for the next time around.

8. Work Experience

Work experience can help young people to gain more understanding about what it is really like to go out to work. Even if it is just for a few days or a week, a lot can be gained from working alongside other people in a job that a young person may be interested in. Work experience can also give ideas for different types of jobs, especially if a young person is not sure about which career or studies they may be interested in.

Once a young person has organised a period of work experience, this section also provides a record of the skills that a young person has learned. It is good to think about taking photographs of young people while they are hard at work, as a record of their achievements.

C: MONEY



1. Shopping for Clothes

Even before a young person is earning money, they may still have a set amount of money to spend on clothes. This section is a first step to learning how to budget the money you have and to understand that often you may have to make savings, because you do not have enough money. It also encourages young people to compare different prices and to make decisions about which things are best value for money.

2. Budgeting

Budgeting money is an important skill for young people to practice and develop before they move on to more independent living. This skill should not be left until the young person has moved into an independent living environment, but should be an on-going process throughout the time when they are being 'looked after'.

To begin looking at the budgeting process, workers should actively encourage a young person to think about and plan how they spend their money e.g. pocket money. This can develop further with the older age groups, by encouraging them to think about how much it costs to live, in terms of food, clothing, bills etc. There should be no age limit on when to begin this budgeting. The earlier it is looked at, the better it is for those involved. This will hopefully enable young people to have a greater awareness in the future.

Workers may find it difficult to engage young people in discussing issues about budgeting money, as it is not often seen as an exciting subject. It can sometimes be difficult to bring in the reality of what happens when all your money has been spent. Group learning can be beneficial by encouraging discussions between a group of young people, but also with groups of staff. This way, both young people and staff can learn together some of the various strategies for budgeting money.

3. Paying the Bills

It is easy for children and young people to develop an unrealistic approach to the cost of living, as they are often not involved in these matters. The first step is to look at all the different bills that you have to pay when you are living in your own place. It may come as a surprise to find out how many different bills you have to remember to pay. This section also explores some of the consequences when bills are not paid. Hire purchase is also explained, as this is a common means for many people when they want to buy something that is more expensive than they can afford. It is important for young people to start to realise that some purchases may not always be good value if they are bought by hire purchase.

4. Shopping for Food

From a fairly young age, children and young people should be able to learn about the cost of day-to-day items in shops. This section provides ideas on how to compare prices in supermarkets and maybe save some money. It could be used as a game to see who can find the cheapest prices for a weekly shopping list!

5. Benefits

At some time in their life, a person may have to claim welfare benefits. When the need arises, it can often be a difficult process of having to complete many forms and have formal meetings with various welfare benefits staff. This section will equip a young person with the knowledge they will need if they ever have to claim benefits.

Completing application forms can be useful to boost a young person's confidence, so they need not be worried about having to fill in such forms, which can often ask for a lot of detailed personal information.

6. Wages

This section should prepare a young person for the first time that they get a job and start to receive regular wages. It also explains about when you have to pay income tax. It can often come as a shock when you realise that you often have to pay tax! This can also help to develop useful mathematics skills when trying to calculate how much tax you have to pay.

7. Bank Account

To promote budgeting skills, saving and looking after your money, it is good to encourage a young person to open a bank account – even if they may not have much money to start off with. Completing this exercise will help to familiarise young people with banks and how to manage your bank account.

8. Savings

As a continuation of the bank account theme, this section encourages young people to think about why it may be a good idea to save some of their money. Saving regularly is a good habit to develop, especially when young people are able to see the rewards of regularly saving even small amounts of money. This skill could help them in the future when they may need to save to budget their money more effectively.

9. Insurance

This is just an introduction to exploring some of the different kinds of insurance. This could include home insurance, car insurance, and personal insurance. Young people may not have realised how many different kinds of insurance are important in every day life. Some of these are also covered in more detail under 'Official Matters' and 'Safety in the Home'.

10. Tax

This section covers similar issues to those in the 'Wages' section. It is aimed at pointing out to young people that you are often paying tax on purchases in shops or from your wages. It may be more relevant in countries where people have to fill in forms to pay their tax.

D: ABOUT MYSELF



A lot of confidential issues can come out of discussions around these subjects. This could be around experiences of home life or factors around coming into care. The worker must have some understanding of the issues that could be likely to arise. It may also be necessary for workers to have some basic counselling skills, or to know who a young person could go to talk to if a particular issue arose.

Completing each section does not have to be all written work. For example, computer graphics, informal discussions, or taking photographs can be used to record a young person's achievements. Workers should use their imagination to explore a variety of ways that may help a young person to develop their skills and knowledge in these areas. The important thing is that whatever takes place is recorded, somehow, in the young person's folder. A worker could also devise a quiz game that looks at some of the questions, but in a more informal way. The quiz could be answer individually or in a group, as long as the answers are not likely to be confidential or embarrassing. The worker could discuss the responses together with the young person or the group.

1. Feeling Good About Myself

It can be difficult at first for young people to start thinking about this and they may find some things difficult to discuss. It is about helping to improve young people's self-esteem and the way others may view them. Praising young people about their achievements is important, as this can encourage them to feel good about themselves.

To help young people to express themselves, try encouraging them to use pictures. This could be through drawing pictures or by using graphics on a computer, which could be more interesting for a young person. This could also help a young person to express things they may have difficulty talking about. It is important that a young person is left with positive feelings and not negative ones.

Like with most of the areas, in this section, a young person may talk about some private and personal things. The worker should respect this, but should also be clear with the young person about exactly what can or cannot remain confidential between the young person and the worker. It should be explained to all young people that if they talk about something where himself or herself, or someone else, may be harmed or in danger, then the worker would have to tell someone else about it, so they are safe from harm.

2. Being Healthy

The aim of this section is to promote healthy lifestyles and healthy living. It may be helpful to also gather some information, e.g. leaflets or booklets, on health education, so that young people can fill any gaps in their knowledge.

3. The Doctor

One of these activities aims to promote skills in contacting your doctor and gaining helpful information. It can be useful to explain to young people what sort of medical treatment or prescriptions they may have to pay for in later life. Some young people may also find it useful to learn that they may be able to change their Doctor if they are unhappy with them, or that if necessary, they have the right to see their medical files. If a worker is unsure about any of this information, then they should check it out first. This is something they could do together with the young person.

4. The Dentist

During these discussions, it may become more apparent how young people have been affected by poverty and dependence on welfare benefits. For example, some young people may not realise that if you are working then you have to pay for your dental treatment and other health expenses, so this can be discussed with a young person. For some young people, it may uncover fears about going to the dentist.

5. Alcohol

This section will explore a young person's attitudes towards drinking alcohol. It also looks at safe drinking habits. The idea is for young people to think about the effects of alcohol now, but also in the future.

6. Drugs

These discussions may result in many interesting questions from young people, for example: why are some drugs legal and others are not? Workers may find it hard to come up with a simple answer, as there may not be one correct response for many questions. It is important that workers are not judgmental, with their own values or morals, as many young people's views towards drug use may be very different to a worker's. Workers should try to be as well informed as possible, and should seek out information wherever it is available, especially about your country's particular drug laws, before facilitating the completion of this section.

7. Smoking

Many young people may already have decided to smoke cigarettes. Many of the questions will encourage young people to think about smoking habits that they may have already developed. It is important to share information on the effects of smoking on one's health, but also on your wallet!

8. Sexual Awareness

Several important areas for discussion are covered in this section. Many of these areas may have never been discussed with a young person before, or they may find them too embarrassing to talk about. It is therefore important for workers to feel comfortable when talking to young people about these issues, but also to respect a young person's feelings or potential embarrassment.

It is also important for workers to acknowledge that some young people may not be interested in heterosexual relationships. It is vital that workers should not express their own possible prejudices, but be supportive for a young person who may be exploring their own sexuality and sexual feelings. It is helpful to be aware of useful contacts for additional information or support with matters around sexuality and sexual well-being.

9. Personal Hygiene

This section introduces issues about looking after yourself, and particularly about taking care of your appearance and cleanliness.

10. Official Matters

This covers areas that can sometimes be overlooked. While they may not be the most interesting subjects, it can be important for young people to understand why these things are necessary for an individual. Some countries have identity cards that all citizens should have, whereas others just have passports.

E: MY HOME



1. Where I Live

Before a young person starts to think about moving on from where they live, it is important to explore feelings about the place where they currently live, or have lived in the past. This is all part of remembering and acknowledging your personal history. Some young people may have lived in several different places and experienced several moves, with some being potentially upsetting or traumatic. A worker must be sensitive and understanding to a young person's feelings about these events during their childhood or youth.

Many young people, especially those who have lived in residential or foster care, have probably experienced many different meetings where professionals discuss their care and their personal situation. A young person may have never been asked how they actually feel about this aspect of their care. It is therefore important that young people can understand that they have a right to have their views and feelings heard.

2. Moving On

Eventually, all young people will move on from where they are currently living. Many will move to their own place, to live more independently as a young adult. Some young people will go back to live with family members, but may still have aftercare support needs. This section helps workers and young people to look together at the support that they may need.

It can help young people to look wider than the people in the care home or social workers etc. Workers can help young people to discover that they may have a wider network of support than was first thought. It may also become apparent that some young people may have nobody to help him or her, so they would need extra support. It would be beneficial to revisit part A: Social Life, sections 1-3.

3. Furnishing your home

This section takes a step-by-step look at furnishing a young person's new home. It can take several weeks of preparation, to ensure that a young person has everything that they will need. It is also good to encourage young people to think about other places where they can get furniture from, as they may not have enough money to buy everything brand new. Hopefully, this should create a real sense of ownership and excitement when a young person can move into their new place in a planned and thought-out manner.

4. Safety In the Home

An important aspect of living in your own place is making sure you can keep yourself safe from harm. This is particularly true when problems in the home arise, e.g. with electrical items, gas cookers, accidents etc. It can be useful for a young person to learn some basic first aid skills, or to learn more about fire safety. This can help to prevent accidents or injuries in the home.

5. Cooking

As they get older, some young people may still never have had the opportunity to learn how to cook for themselves. Many care homes still have kitchen staff who do all the cooking for young people. Young people should be given many opportunities to experience cooking and try out their own ideas for recipes that they enjoy to eat. It is also important to encourage young people to try cooking food that will provide them with a balanced and healthy diet. This section also encourages young people to go shopping for the ingredients and to gain an understanding of how much it costs to buy the things that they like to cook and eat.

6. Cleaning

The aim of this section is for young people to take responsibility for keeping their living space clean and tidy. It provides the opportunity for young people to learn how to clean things properly. As a means of encouragement, a cleaning record can be kept to show a young person how much effort they have put into keeping their space clean.

7. Washing Clothes

Learning to use a washing machine can sometimes be a bit complicated. It is important to get to know the correct settings on the machine and how to sort out your clothes before you wash them. Then there will not be the possibility of ruining your clothes, e.g. by turning your white shirt pink or by shrinking a favourite t-shirt! A young person should also get to know how to safely use an iron – plenty of practice definitely helps!

F. LOCAL INFORMATION

Sections A to E provide many opportunities for the young person and worker or carer to collect information.

Any information that is collected, should be added to the



And arranged under the following sections: (the same as the 'Skills for Life' Pack)

- A: Social Life**
- B: School, Training & Work**
- C: Money**
- D: About Myself**
- E: My Home**

The information that is collected could consist of:

- Leaflets
- Brochures
- Maps
- Timetables
- Prospectuses
- Application Forms

This information can be used by anyone else in the future, and will provide a good information source.