Supporting caregivers to provide a secure base

This section provides guidance on the use of the Secure Base Support Programme.

The secure base support programme can be used with the full range of caregivers, including birth parents, family and friends carers, foster carers, adopters and residential workers. The programme is relevant for the care of children and young people of all ages.

The secure base support programme can be used in a range of contexts. For example:

- When children and young people are thought to be in need or at risk.
- At the beginning of a fostering or adoption placement.
- As part of the routine supervision of foster carers.
- When fostering or adoptive placements are in difficulties.
- In residential settings, to support the key worker and/or the staff group's caregiving capacities.

The most productive way of using this resource is for the Secure Base Interview to be carried out first. This will assess the strengths and difficulties of the child and the caregiver and provide indicators for further development and support.

An outline ‘script' for the programme is provided, but this should be adjusted to use language that is clear and understandable to the caregiver.

N.B. It is important to promote fun and relaxation (with the child and apart from the child at times). The goal is – for caregivers to enjoy as well as help the child!
The programme includes an introductory session and then five further sessions covering the five dimensions of caregiving and their associated benefit to the child, outlined in the Secure Base Model:

The Secure Base Model

The five sessions, which focus on each of the five dimensions of caregiving, involve the following steps:

- Educating the caregiver: the idea/theory behind each dimension - and why it helps children.
- Exploring the child's needs in relation to the dimension.
- Exploring and developing the caregiver's thinking and feeling in relation to the dimension.
- Promoting caregiver's sense of competence in the dimension by highlighting existing positive caregiving approaches and building on them, or developing new ones. (Have some practical suggestions of things for the caregiver to do – appeal to their creativity)
- Helping caregiver to look for and value signs of progress in the child in relation to the dimension.
- Promoting caregiver's awareness of the links between all five dimensions.

N.B. The Secure Base Progress Record can be used to record and review each session.

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