



MAKING POSITIVE MOVES

A toolkit for living your best life



About The Project:

Joan spent most of her adult life living in long-stay hospitals far away from her home and her family. Joan would dream of one day having a home with a garden and neighbours she could get to know.

With the support of a care provider and a dedicated team Joan's dreams came true and she moved out of hospital and back to the area where her family lived.

Joan's story was the inspiration for a research project called Making Positive Moves which received NIHR grant funding. The project involved interviewing 22 adults with learning disabilities about life after discharge from hospital with the aim of understanding what people need to stay out of hospital.

The story of our research can be found by typing making positive moves animation into youtube or following this link: [Making Positive Moves Animation Video The Research Findings](#)

The toolkit was developed from the research findings and it aims to help people to build and strengthen the foundations they need to live their best life in their own home after discharge.



This picture shows the Making Positive Moves research team working with adults with learning disabilities, their families, carers, advocates and health and social care staff to develop this toolkit.

Your Details:

Name:

Dates when you worked on the toolkit:

Names of the people that supported you to complete the toolkit:

Contents:

Introduction	1
Getting Started	3
Foundation 1: Feeling safe	5
Who is important in your life	7
Your support at home	9
Feeling safe at home	11
How strong is my foundation	13
Creating an action plan	17
Foundation 2: Making my own choices	19
Daily life choices	21
Major life choices	23
How strong is my foundation?	25
Creating an action plan	27
Foundation 3: Belonging and keeping busy	29
Being part of your community	31
Having routines and keeping busy	33
How strong is my foundation?	35
Creating an action plan	39
Foundation 4: Happy with who I am	41
Feeling good about yourself	43
Celebrating who you are	45
How strong is my foundation?	47
Creating an action plan	49
Living my best life	51
Your best life going forwards	53
Thank you	55
Extra pages to write	56
Acknowledgements	59

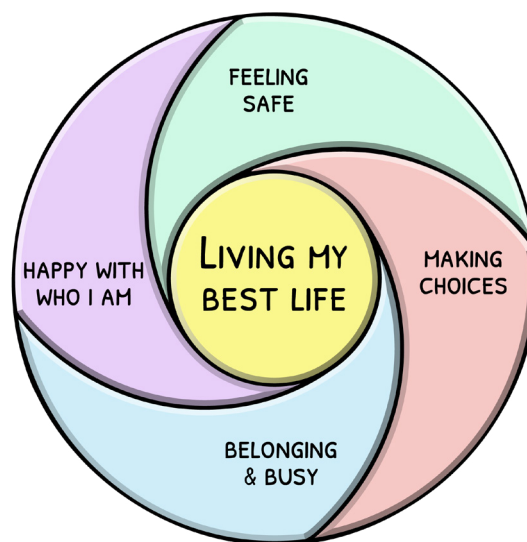
Introduction:

Who is this toolkit for?

For people with learning disabilities who have had an admission to a mental health hospital or forensic mental health hospital.

How was the toolkit developed?

The Making Positive Moves research team spoke to people about their experiences of moving out of hospital. The findings of the research were then used in a series of workshops with adults with learning disabilities, their families and support networks to co-produce this toolkit.



What is in the toolkit?

This toolkit has five sections:

Foundation 1 – Feeling safe

Foundation 2 – Making my own choices

Foundation 3 – Belonging and keeping busy

Foundation 4 – Happy with who I am

Living my best life

Each section has a set of questions and guidance which will help you to:

- check how strong your foundations are
- find any cracks in your foundations
- give you ideas for strengthening your foundations

How do I use the toolkit?

We suggest you complete this toolkit with someone who knows you well. This could be a keyworker, family member or a health or social care professional.

There are questions for you and questions for the people supporting you.

Take your time. You don't need to do it all in one go. You can go through one section at a time and take breaks whenever you need to.

If you run out of space for writing or drawing your answers there are some blank pages at the back of the toolkit (pages 56-58)

This toolkit is available on the *Making Positive Moves* website - www.makingpositivemoves.org

The website will continue to be updated with video guidance and further resources to help you with using the toolkit.

Review

You can come back to the toolkit whenever things change in your life. Especially if you're moving again or your support needs change. It is a good way to check how strong your foundations are.

Getting Started:



It may help when completing this toolkit if you can share some of your life story and experiences with the person supporting you.

When people know what makes you feel safe, valued, and happy, they can support you better. Sharing your story can give others a deeper understanding of who you are.

People who took part in our research told us that difficult life experiences can affect:

- how safe they feel in relationships
- how confident they feel making decisions
- how they feel about themselves

If the people around you understand these things, they can support you in ways that really make a difference.

Ways to share your story

There are lots of different ways you can share your story. You could try:

- Speaking to people about your life
- Showing people things that are important to you
- Making a video or audio recording
- Sharing photos or drawings
- Talking about songs that help tell your story
- Keeping a journal about your life

Use whatever feels comfortable for you.

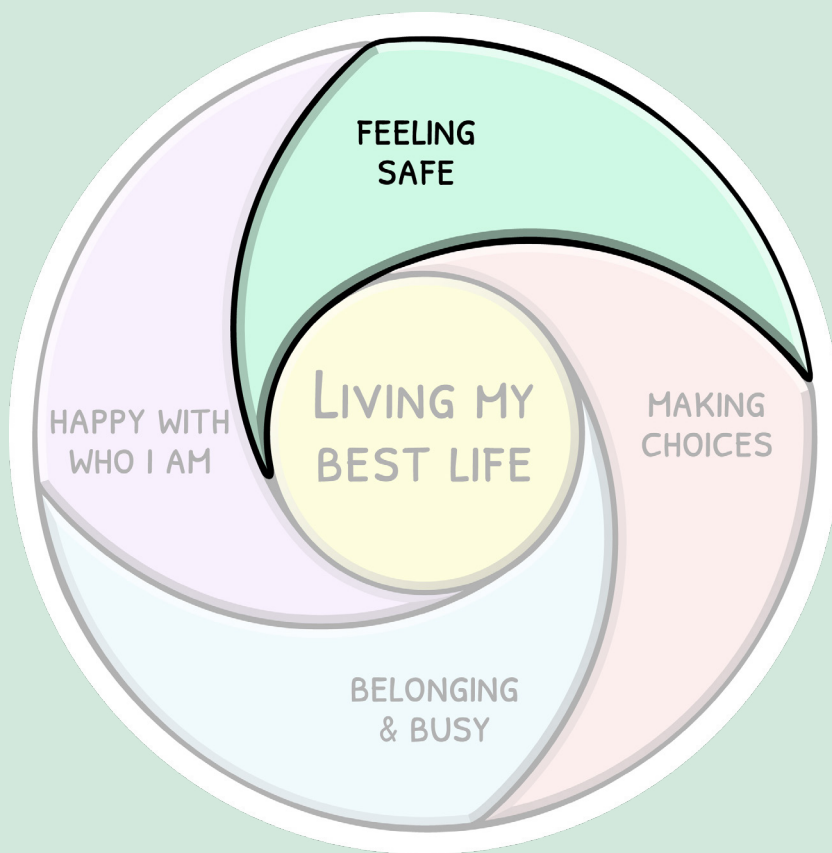
Getting started

In the next section, we will look at the first of the four foundations. We'll explore what's important to you and how to make your foundations stronger.

Remember to put as much information as you can. This will help you and your support network understand what matters to you and help make your foundations stronger.

If it helps, you could ask the person supporting you to make notes as you go. Remember, if you need extra space for your answers, there are blank pages at the back of the toolkit (pages 56-58). You can also use the rating scales to help you consider how things are going.

FOUNDATION 1



Feeling Safe In My Relationships

About This Foundation:

The first foundation we are going to look at is how safe you feel in your relationships.

People that took part in our research told us that there are three main things they needed to give them an overall sense of safety:

- Feeling known and understood by the people supporting them
- Feeling listened to
- Feeling a sense of connection and belonging

It helps to start by thinking about who supports you in your life.

It is important to be supported by people who know and understand you well. It helps if the people who support you share some of your likes and interests.

On the next page you will find some questions to help you think about this.

Foundation 1: Feeling Safe in My Relationships

Who is important in your life?



You can use the next page to create a picture, or write about the important people in your life.

- Who do you like to spend time with?
- Who do you like to speak to regularly by phone or in person?

This might be people you live with, friends, family, people you see outside of your home, people that support you, pets or your favourite animals.

One idea could be to create a photo collage of the people who are important in your life. You can print photos or use the ones you already have. You could ask for support from people around you.

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Foundation 1: Feeling Safe in My Relationships

Your support at home.



Here are some questions about how happy you are with your support at home. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

- Do you like spending time with the people that support you? And do they enjoy spending time with you?
- Do the people that support you know what you like and dislike?
- Do you feel listened to at home?
- Do you feel confident to ask for help when you need it?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Foundation 1: Feeling Safe in My Relationships

Feeling safe at home.



For people who have spent time in hospital it can take a long time to feel safe in their home and with the people around them. A change in someone's life or a life event can sometimes mean people feel less safe.

Here are some questions about feeling safe at home. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture to answer the questions.

- When do you feel safest in your home? (who are you with, what are you doing, what is happening?)
- If you have ever felt unsafe, what helped you to feel safe again?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



How Strong Is My Foundation?

Think about how you have answered the questions above and give each part of this foundation a rating.

Once you have chosen your rating, complete the table about what is working well and what needs to change.

1. Do you feel well supported in your home?


YES


SOMETIMES


NO

What is working well?	What needs to change?

2. Do the people supporting you know you well?


YES


MAYBE


NO

What is working well?	What needs to change?

3. Do you feel listened to?



YES



SOMETIMES



NO

What is working well?	What needs to change?

4. Do you feel safe in your home?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

Are there any questions you have rated yellow or red? The next two pages will help you to create an action plan to strengthen these foundations.

Creating An Action Plan:

This section will help you to create an action plan for strengthening this foundation.

The next page has some ideas about what could be helpful and you may have some of your own.

Use your ratings to the questions on pages 13-16 to help you complete this table:

What needs to change?
What can I do?
What can others do?

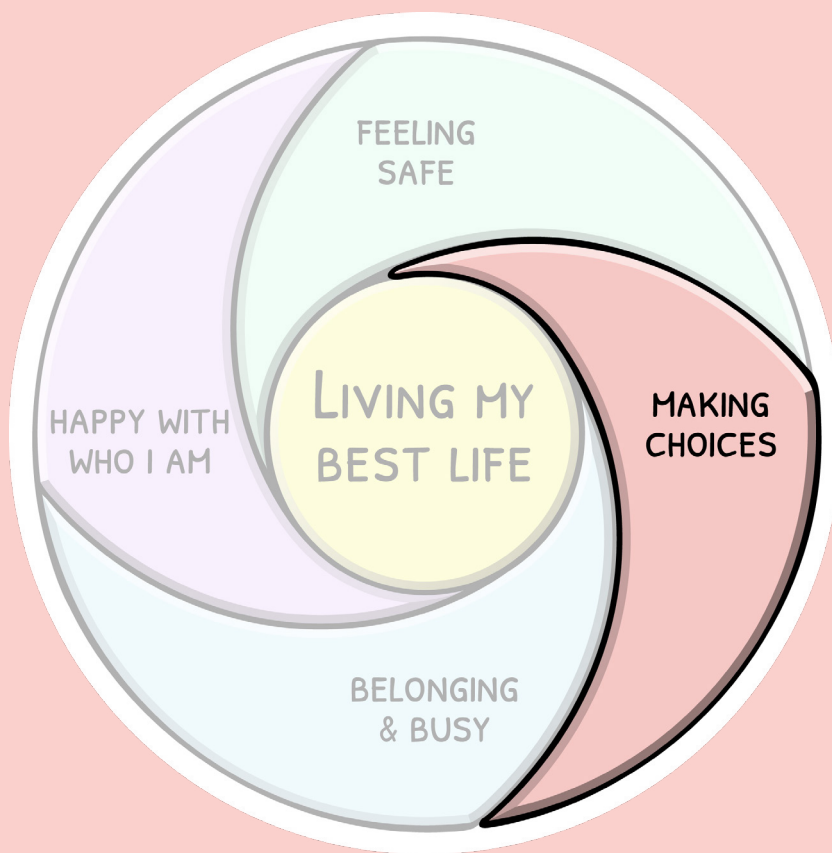
Things that I can be involved with:

- Choosing the staff that support me.
- Helping new people to learn how I like to be supported.
- Making a video or picture about my likes and dislikes and including some information about what helps me to feel listened to.
- Talking to someone I trust about how I feel.

Things that other people can do to help:

- Help me to connect with the important people in my life.
- Make sure I have people supporting me that know me well.
- Involve me in choosing the people who will support me.
- Make sure I have a keyworker that knows and understands my needs.
- Prepare me for any changes to my support.
- Look after the people supporting me (training, supervision, time off).
- Check in regularly with me about how happy I am with my support.

FOUNDATION 2



Making My Own Choices

About This Foundation:

▶ The second foundation is about making choices.

The people that took part in our research told us how important it was to make their own choices.

They talked about two different kinds of choices:

1. Daily life choices – these are choices you make as part of your everyday routine. For example, what food you would like to eat or which clothes you want to wear.
2. Major life choices – these are big decisions that you make about your future and how you want to live your life. These choices can change your life in big ways, so it's normal to ask for help from a trusted person and to take time to think about it carefully.

In the research, people talked about how important it was to have freedom to make their own choices but also that there were parts of their life where they wanted help to make choices.

Foundation 2: Making My Own Choices

Making choices in your daily life.



Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture about the choices you like to be involved with.

What choices do you like to be involved with?

- Food and eating (shopping lists, shopping, favourite foods)
- What you do each day (choosing where to go, what to do, how to travel)
- Who you spend time with (seeing friends, family, going to social events)
- What you spend your money on (buying new things, activities, food, savings)

Are you happy with the amount of support you get to make daily life choices? Are there times when you get too much or too little support to make choices?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Foundation 2: Making My Own Choices

Major life choices.



Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

Which decisions do you like to be involved with?

- Where you live?
- Who you live with?
- Who you are supported by?
- What you spend your time doing?

Are you happy with the amount of support you get to make major life choices? Are there times when you get too much or too little support to make choices?

Write or draw your thoughts here.

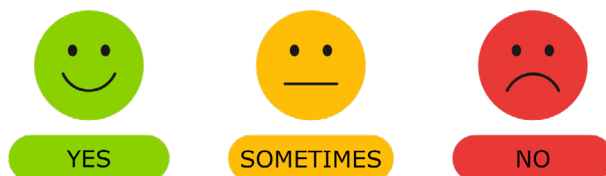


How Strong Is My Foundation?

Think about how you have answered the questions above and give each part of this foundation a rating.

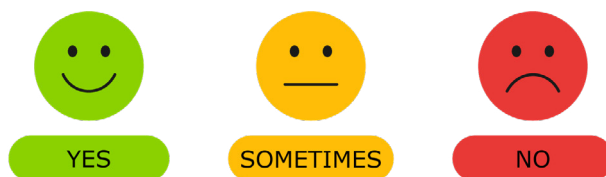
Once you have chosen your rating, complete the table about what is working well and what needs to change.

1. Are you happy with the amount of support you get to make daily life choices?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

2. Are you happy with the amount of support you get when making major life choices?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

3. Do you feel happy with the amount of choices you are supported to make?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

Are there any questions you have rated yellow or red? The next two pages will help you to create an action plan to strengthen these foundations.

Creating An Action Plan:

This section will help you to create an action plan for strengthening this foundation.

The next page has some ideas about what could be helpful and you may have some of your own.

Use your ratings to the questions on pages 25 & 26 to help you complete this table:

What needs to change?
What can I do?
What can others do?

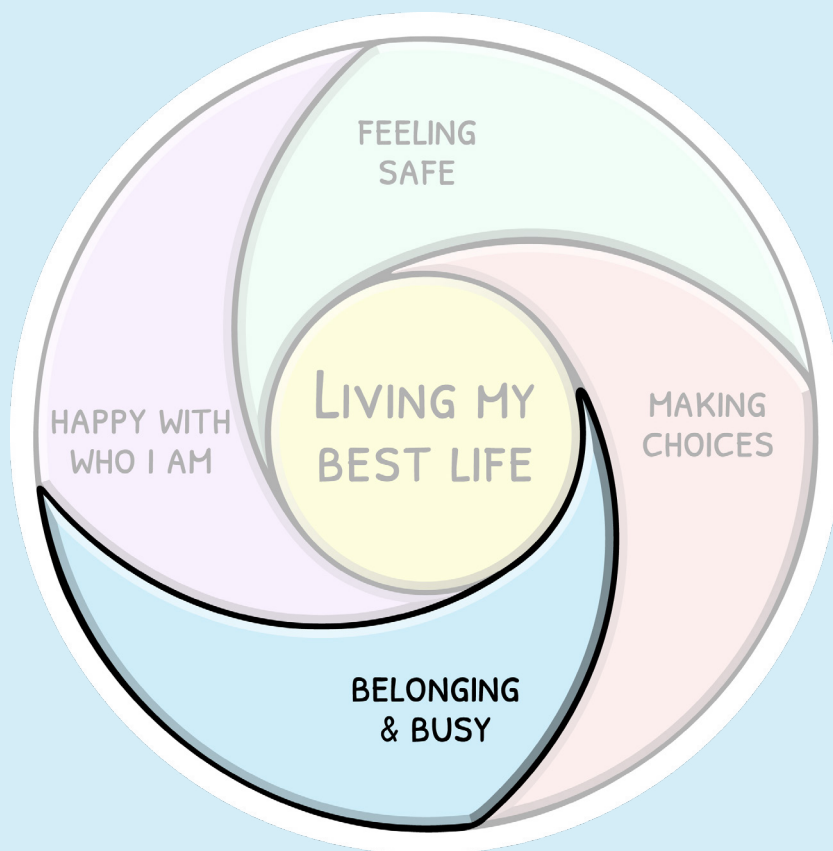
Things that I can be involved with:

- Let people know if they are giving me too much or too little help with choices.
- Let people know if there are more things I would like choices about.
- Let people know if there are choices I am finding difficult.

Things that other people can do to help:

- Follow my preferences for support with choice making.
- Making sure you follow any communication guidelines for supporting me with choices (visual aids, objects of reference).
- Make sure I have the right transport to support my choices about how I spend my time.
- Remember that how I feel about making choices might change from day to day and over time. Be responsive to signs that I am not happy with my choices.
- Be flexible in supporting me so I can have more choice about when I go out.
- Explore with me how I want help with choices and decisions.
- Looking for more ways to involve me in decisions.
- Support me to make positive choices which help me to live my best life.
- The Feeling at Home Toolkit has some useful resources for supporting someone with making decisions. <https://feelingathome.org.uk/resources/>

FOUNDATION 3



Belonging And Keeping Busy

About This Foundation:

The third foundation is about belonging and keeping busy.

Some people told us that being part of their community was really important. They needed to feel known and respected in their community. This gave them a sense of belonging where they live. They also said they liked having routines and doing things that matter to them.

A community is a group of people who spend time doing things together and helping each other. Some communities see each other in person, such as neighbours, activity groups, day centres or religious groups.

Some communities might be online, such as on social media or computer games.

Your community might be in your neighbourhood, saying hello and spending time with your neighbours or those you see in the park, in the library or in a local shop.

On the next page you will find some questions to help you think about your community and your routines.

Foundation 3: Belonging And Keeping Busy

Being part of your community.



Here are some questions about being part of your community. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

- Do you see and spend time with people outside of your home?
- Do you know your neighbours? If not, do you want to get to know them?
- What do you enjoy doing with other people that makes you feel happy or included?
- Do you have a group of people that you feel you belong with?
- Would you like to have more people that you feel you belong with?
- Would you like to spend more time doing different activities or with different people outside of your home?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Foundation 3: Belonging And Keeping Busy

Having routines and keeping busy.



Here are some questions about your weekly routine. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

- What do you do on each day of the week?
- Do you have the right amount of things to do in your day?
- What jobs or tasks do you enjoy doing at home? (This could be something like cooking, cleaning or gardening)
- What activities do you enjoy doing inside your home? (This could be something like board games, puzzles or arts & crafts)
- What activities do you enjoy doing when you go out (going to cafes, going for walks, going to college, volunteering, working, seeing friends and family)?
- Are there any other activities that you would like to do or try?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



How Strong Is My Foundation?

Think about how you have answered the questions above and give each part of this foundation a rating.

Once you have chosen your rating, complete the table about what is working well and what needs to change.

1. Do you feel part of your community?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

2. Are you happy with how you spend your time at home?



YES



SOMETIMES



NO

What is working well?	What needs to change?

3. Are you happy with the activities you do outside of your home?


YES


SOMETIMES


NO

What is working well?	What needs to change?

4. Are you happy with your weekly routine?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

Are there any questions you have rated yellow or red? The next two pages will help you to create an action plan to strengthen these foundations.

Creating An Action Plan:

This section will help you to create an action plan for strengthening this foundation.

The next page has some ideas about what could be helpful and you may have some of your own.

Use your ratings to the questions on pages 35-38 to help you complete this table:

What needs to change?
What can I do?
What can others do?

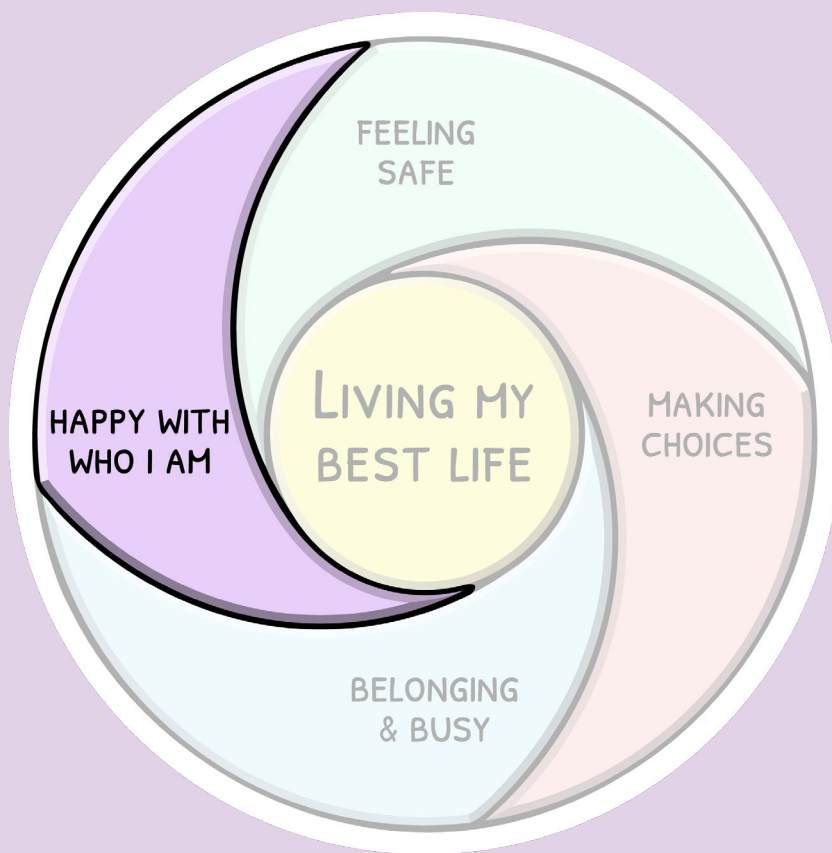
Things that I can be involved with:

- Let people know if I want to be more involved with tasks at home.
- Let people know if I would like to do more or less in my day.
- Let people know if I would like more structure or routine in my day.
- Ask for support to find out about how I can get more involved in the community and write a list of new things I would like to try.

Things that other people can do to help:

- Talk with me about my everyday life and how it is working for me.
- Support me to form a routine or create more structure in my day.
- Support me to explore other options for how I spend my time. This might be employment, voluntary work, places for learning, group activities, day centres, leisure activities. Help me to make and keep my connections with friends or family
- Help me to find opportunities to connect with other people outside of my home.

FOUNDATION 4



Feeling Happy With Who I Am

About This Foundation:

The fourth foundation is about feeling happy with who you are.

People told us that it's important for them to feel happy with who they are and to feel good about themselves.

It was also important to have people around them who help them feel positive and proud of who they are.

Feeling good about yourself often depends on how strong your other foundations are.

If your other foundations need strengthening, it might help to focus on those first. You may find that when those areas improve, it changes how you feel about yourself too.

Sometimes when we've had bad experiences, it can be hard to notice the positive things in our lives. If the other foundations feel strong but you're still not feeling good in yourself, you may want to talk to someone who supports you about getting more help.

Foundation 4: Happy with Who I Am

Feeling good about yourself.



Here are some questions about feeling good about yourself. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

- What do you like about yourself?
- What words would you use to describe yourself? What words might other people use?
- What are the things that you like doing in your life that help you to feel happy about yourself?
- What are you proud of?
- Is there anything that could change to help you feel happier about yourself?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Foundation 4: Happy with Who I Am

Celebrating who you are.



Here are some questions about celebrating who you are. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

- Do others tell you that you are a good person or a person they value?
- How do the people that support you celebrate the great things about you? For example, do they tell you what they like about you? Do they tell others? Do they celebrate your achievements?
- Do people tell you about the positive things that you have done?
- Is there anyone else you would like to share your achievements with?
- What have people told you about why they like spending time with you?

Write or draw your thoughts here.

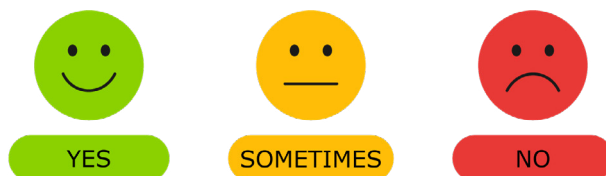


How Strong Is My Foundation?

Think about how you have answered the questions above and give each part of this foundation a rating:

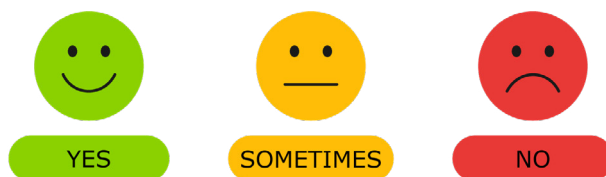
Once you have chosen your rating, complete the table about what is working well and what needs to change.

1. Do you feel happy with who you are?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

2. Do you think of yourself as a good person?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

3. Do others value and celebrate who you are and what you do?



What is working well?	What needs to change?

Are there any questions you have rated yellow or red? The next two pages will help you to create an action plan to strengthen these foundations.

Creating An Action Plan:

This section will help you to create an action plan for strengthening this foundation.

The next page has some ideas about what could be helpful and you may have some of your own.

Use your ratings to the questions on pages 47 & 48 to help you complete this table:

What needs to change?
What can I do?
What can others do?

Things that I can be involved with:

To help you notice the positive things about yourself:

- Keep a journal each week of the things that make you proud of yourself or happy with who you are.
- Take photographs of things that help you to feel happy about yourself.
- Share good news with family and friends.
- Use a wish board or achievements board.
- Keep reminders or keepsakes of things that have made you happy about yourself.

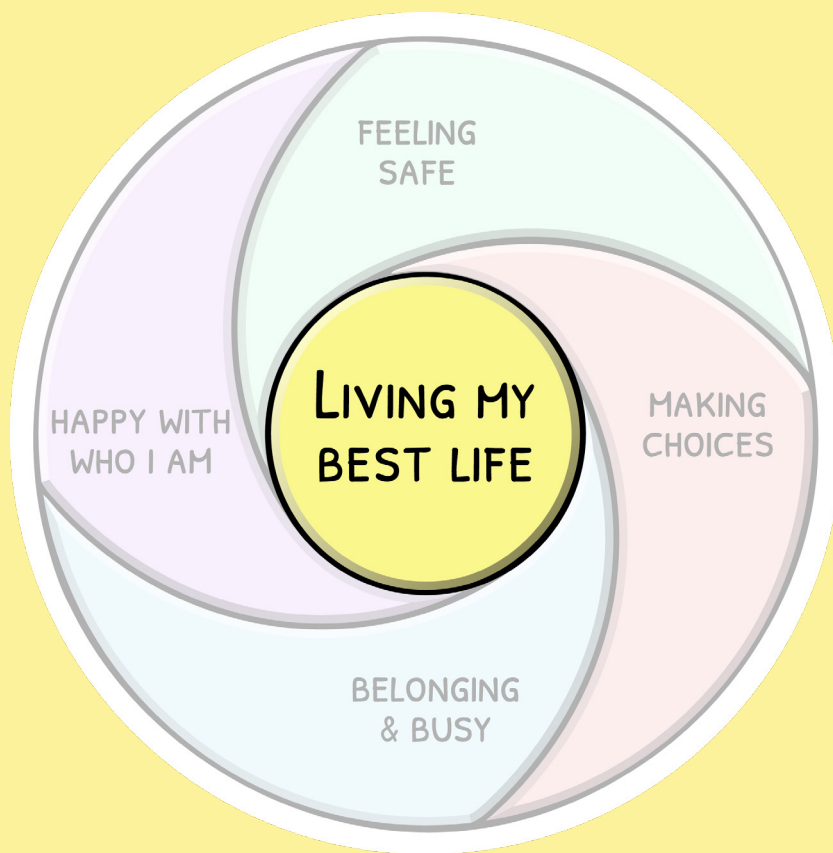
Sometimes people need extra help when they feel unhappy about who they are. You are not alone and there are people who can help. You could:

- Ask your GP for help with your mood or mental health.
- Talk to a counsellor, therapist or psychologist for more support.

Things that other people can do to help:

- Find out how I would like to celebrate successes and important events.
- Let me know what other people value about me.
- Help me to tell important people in my life about my achievements.
- Find out what helps me to feel good about myself.
- Notice if I seem down and talk to me about whether I need any extra support.

Living My Best Life



About This Section:

The final section is about living your best life.

People told us that when their foundations are strong they are able to live their best life.

This toolkit has helped you to think about each foundation. You now know which foundations feel strong, and which ones you need to strengthen.

In this next section you can think about any hopes and dreams you have for the future to work towards your best life.

Everyone's best life will look different.

Living My Best Life:



Here are some questions about living your best life. Use the next page to write, draw or create a picture of your answers.

For you to live your best life:

- What would your home look like?
- Who would you be living with?
- What would you be doing? (include jobs at home, leisure activities, spending time with family and friends)
- What things would you be doing that make you feel good and proud?
- What hopes and dreams do you have for the future?
- What do you hope to be doing in 5 years and 10 years' time?
- Who can help you to work towards your best life?

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Thank you:

Thank you for using the Making Positive Moves toolkit.

Hopefully it has helped you to identify some of the good things happening in your life as well as the areas where you want to strengthen your foundations.

Once you and the people supporting you have worked on the action plans you may want to rate your foundations again.

We would also recommend revisiting the toolkit after any major life events or changes.

If you would like to share your experiences of using the toolkit please complete our survey: <https://forms.office.com/e/df5LrD0Kwu>

We can be contacted via email: hpft.makingpositivemoves@nhs.net

Extra space to write:

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Extra space to write:

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Extra space to write:

Write or draw your thoughts here.



Acknowledgements:

Making Positive Moves was a research study which aimed to understand what helps adults with learning disabilities to stay out of mental health hospitals after discharge. It was an independent research study conducted by the University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Hertfordshire County Council and University of Warwick.

In Making Positive Moves, we interviewed 22 adults with learning disabilities that had been in a mental health hospital. After listening to and analysing people's stories, we identified that there were four essential foundations that people needed to build their best life after discharge. If these foundations were weak or changes happened which led to cracks in the foundations, people could be at risk of hospital readmission.

We ran workshops to develop a toolkit based on our research, which could help people to build and strengthen their foundations. Lots of different people came to these workshops, including adults with learning disabilities, their families, carers, advocates and health and social care professionals. Our hope as a group was to create something which could put the research findings into practice and help more adults with learning disabilities to stay out of hospital.

The Making Positive Moves research team includes:

Dr Louisa Rhodes – Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Silvana Mengoni – University of Hertfordshire

Pashtana Zormati - University of Hertfordshire

George Dixon - University of Hertfordshire

Dr Annabel Head – South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust / Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Helen Ellis-Caird – University of Hertfordshire / Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

Sam Prowse – Hertfordshire County Council

Lauren Taber – Hertfordshire County Council

Professor David Wellsted – University of Hertfordshire
Professor Peter Langdon – University of Warwick / University of Birmingham

Louisa Rhodes acted as Chief Investigator and led the co-production workshops to develop this toolkit. This toolkit would not have been possible without funding from NHS England to support with the development.

The Making Positive Moves Research Team would like to acknowledge the valuable input of:

- The people with learning disabilities who took part in the study and generously shared their stories, along with their support networks.
- The members of our steering group and expert by experience consultation group who so willingly shared their knowledge, experience and valuable time to the project.
- The people that attended our co-production workshops and contributed their knowledge and expertise to help us develop this toolkit so the research findings can be used in a practical and accessible way to improve the lives of adults with learning disabilities.
- Colleagues and organisations who facilitated recruitment and data collection at our research sites.
- Max Gregoriou, Jonathan Klug and Beluga Animation.

The Making Positive Moves Study was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) under the Research for Patient Benefit Programme. Award ID: PB-PG-1217-20032. The production of this toolkit was funded by NHS England Learning Disability and Autism Programme.

We also gratefully acknowledge impact acceleration account funding from the University of Hertfordshire to support the coproduction workshops.

The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR, The Department of Health and Social Care or NHS England.



Hertfordshire Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust



South London
and Maudsley
NHS Foundation Trust

FUNDED BY

NIHR

National Institute for
Health and Care Research



Photosymbols®

Professional Licence 5969688428599

**University of
Hertfordshire UH**

Images from the PhotoSymbols library. Copyright © PhotoSymbols.

© 2026 Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. All rights reserved.

MAKING POSITIVE MOVES