

THE HORIZONS PROJECT
PUBLICATION SERIES
HP-004

Holding the Thread

A Relational Framework for Continuity of Engagement

Version 1.0

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About This Publication

The earlier publications have established the purpose, foundations and engagement challenge at the centre of The Horizons Project. This publication now turns to the relational question: how do relationships help protect Momentum when life, pressure or uncertainty might otherwise interrupt it?

It assumes that foundation and moves directly into the framework of continuity, trust and consistent connection. Its purpose is not to re-explain Momentum, but to show why relationships can make continued engagement more possible between formal appointments.

The publication presents a practical, non-clinical framework for understanding how people remain connected to progress. At its centre is one clear idea: people are more likely to experience lasting progress when they are able to maintain meaningful engagement between appointments.

If the previous publication helped us think about why people disengage, this one asks a quieter but equally important question: what helps someone remain connected? That shift matters because Momentum is not concerned only with the point at which someone steps away from support. It is also concerned with the small relational conditions that may make continued engagement more possible in the first place.

Relationships Protect Continuity

The framework begins with a practical observation: helpful appointments are not always enough to protect confidence once everyday life resumes. A person may leave a conversation encouraged, clearer and more motivated, yet pressure can return before the next appointment arrives.

At that point, continuity often depends on whether there is a trusted relationship the person can return to without fear of criticism or failure. That relationship does not remove the pressure; it helps the person face it before avoidance takes hold.

This is why ordinary conversations matter within the Momentum framework. They keep the thread of engagement intact at the point where it might otherwise begin to weaken. The central question is therefore not only what support is available, but what relationship helps a person remain connected to it.

Looking at Continuity Differently

Appointments remain important because they provide specialist knowledge, decisions, plans and direction. The relational framework asks what protects that work once the appointment has ended.

Between appointments, confidence can fade, questions can grow and small uncertainties can become reasons to avoid the next step. Continuity is protected when someone has a dependable relationship in which those uncertainties can be named early.

Trust makes difficult conversations easier because the person does not have to perform confidence they do not feel. Consistency reduces avoidance because contact feels familiar, predictable and safe enough to return to after a setback.

These relational conditions do not replace professional practice. They help people stay close enough to professional practice for it to remain useful.

Momentum is therefore concerned with the thread that connects support over time: the relationship, the conversation, the moment of reflection and the next realistic step. When that thread is protected, progress has a better chance of surviving ordinary disruption.

Relationships Create Continuity

Relationships matter because engagement is easier to sustain when people know where they can return. Trust gives a person permission to be honest about confusion, fear, embarrassment or loss of confidence before those experiences become withdrawal.

Consistency helps because each familiar conversation lowers the effort required to reconnect. Non-judgement matters because people are more likely to return after a setback when they do not expect disappointment, blame or surprise.

A relationship cannot solve every problem, remove all hardship, risk or uncertainty, or replace the work of specialist services. What it can do is create a dependable place to pause, reflect, regain confidence and reconnect with the support already around the person.

That dependable place protects Momentum because it makes return possible. A person can say, “I did not understand,” “I avoided it,” or “I think I have gone backwards,” without that becoming the end of the journey.

The relationship holds continuity long enough for the next step to become thinkable again. In this sense, Momentum is not only about movement; it is about maintaining the conditions that allow movement to continue.

Horizons in Practice

James has recently begun working with a housing officer after a period of instability. The first appointment goes well, and he leaves with several practical next steps.

A few days later, he receives correspondence that he does not understand. Embarrassed to admit this, he begins to consider ignoring it. During a Momentum conversation, the important intervention is not the letter itself, but the relationship that allows James to say he is unsure before avoidance becomes withdrawal.

Through that conversation, he slows down, identifies what needs to be taken back to his housing officer and regains enough confidence to attend the next appointment.

Horizons has not interpreted housing legislation, advised James what decision to make or taken responsibility for the housing officer’s role. It has protected continuity by helping James remain connected to the professional support already around him.

The relationship is the intervention being illustrated: a consistent, non-judgemental place to return before confidence collapses into disengagement.

Why Small Moments Matter

Small moments matter because disengagement often begins quietly. A missed call, an unopened letter or an unanswered question can slowly become distance from support.

Relational continuity gives those moments somewhere to go before they become larger barriers. Opening a letter, making a phone call or asking for clarification can be easier when someone has first had space to think aloud with a trusted person.

The conversation does not make the step impressive or dramatic. It makes the step possible, and that is why it protects Momentum.

An Evidence-Informed Framework

Momentum is evidence-informed, but it is not presented as a replacement for established professional knowledge. Its contribution is to organise familiar insights into a practical relational framework for continuity of engagement.

It draws on well-established understanding of trust, collaboration, consistency, confidence and social connection. The Horizons Project does not claim ownership of these ideas.

Instead, it brings them together around one practical question: what relational conditions help a person remain connected to support between appointments?

As practice develops and evidence grows, the framework should continue to be tested against that question. Learning remains part of protecting Momentum, not a departure from it.

Using the Framework Responsibly

A relational framework must be used with care. Relationships can protect Momentum, but they are not a substitute for specialist advice, treatment, advocacy, assessment, safeguarding or crisis response.

Their role is to help people remain connected to the support that is already appropriate for them. This keeps the framework both practical and humble.

It recognises the value of trust and consistency without asking relationships to carry responsibilities they should not hold. It also recognises that no single approach will fit every person or every situation.

The test is whether the relationship helps someone stay connected to progress in a way that is safe, appropriate and respectful. If it does not, the response should change.

Responsible practice protects both the person and the purpose of Momentum. For that reason, HP-004 defines the relational framework, while the next publication turns to how it is delivered ethically in practice.

Looking Ahead

HP-004 has set out why relationships matter: they protect continuity, make return possible, restore confidence and help people remain connected to support when ordinary pressures threaten engagement.

The next question is how this philosophy is translated into ethical practice. HP-005 therefore moves from the relational framework into Momentum Support Sessions, exploring how this approach is delivered with clear boundaries, appropriate responsibility and practical care.

An Invitation

The word Momentum suggests movement, but this publication has shown that movement often depends on relationship. Progress is easier to sustain when people know they can return, speak honestly and take the next step without fear of judgement.

That is the central contribution of the relational framework. It helps us understand continuity not as something that simply happens, but as something that can be protected through trust, consistency and reflective conversation.

If this publication has made that clearer, it has served its purpose.

Continue Exploring

Continue exploring with the next publication.

HP-005 — Momentum Support Sessions

How the Momentum philosophy is translated into practical, ethical and non-clinical support.

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