



7 Minute Briefing: Anchor Principles of Assessment

Background

Brown et al (2012); Brown and Turney (2014) devised the 5 Anchor Principles for practitioners to use when undertaking assessments, and as a **supportive tool** to use in either one to one or group supervision.

The 5 principles are arranged in sequence to mirror the process and stages of assessment required to produce a sound analytical assessment.

Next steps

Useful information for **further learning**

Research in Practice - Practice Tool for Supervision:
[Using-the-five-anchor-assessment-principles-in-supervision-v4.pdf \(rip.org.uk\)](#)

NSPCC Fact Sheet - Assessing parenting capacity:
[Assessing parenting capacity | www.basw.co.uk](#)

CCI Practice Guidance - Unconscious bias:
[Unconscious bias in social care: quick guide - Childrens \(ccinform.co.uk\)](#)

What do I need to know

The 5 Anchor Principles encourage practitioners to reflect upon their practice and develop their understanding of a child's story, their lived experiences, and the impact of Services' intervention upon their lives.

The **5 Anchor Principles** are:

- ⇒ What is the assessment for?
- ⇒ What is the story?
- ⇒ What does the story mean?
- ⇒ What needs to happen?
- ⇒ How will we know we are making progress?

What is the impact on the child

Poor quality assessments lead to poorer outcomes for children and young people (Turney et al, 2011); the quality of practitioners' thinking dictates the quality of practice and **intervention provided**.

Assessment is an ongoing process, it rarely reaches a natural or obvious conclusion for children and young people. Outcomes have to be negotiated with families, the success of which will depend on the quality of your relationship with the family.

Information

Using the 5 anchor principles of assessment ensures that analysis and critical thinking is an explicit thread running through an assessment process. They can be used at any stage in an assessment or as a framework for discussion.

The term 'anchor' is used because they underpin good assessment practice and help practitioners to become 'anchored' into what they need to know to analyse assessment practice with children and families. Further information can be found in *Brown, Moore & Turney (2012) 'Analysis and Critical Thinking in Assessment'*.

Key messages from research

Problems in assessment seem to lie in the move from the collection of data or information to its use in practice to support **judgement** and **decision making**. Practitioners are generally skilled communicators and at gathering information about families and their circumstances but difficulties then appear in synthesising and analysing that data and evaluating it to draw conclusions (Brown, Moore and Turney, 2014).

What can I do

- Be clear about the **purpose of your assessment** from the beginning - this will give an immediate structure and basis for analysis
- Think about how the family came to be here - **connect information, facts and events** to understand the child's story
- Recognise there can be many **versions of a story**
- **Hypothesise** - make suggestions about what could be happening and how you know this, test out your hypothesis through observations and conversations with the family and other professionals
- Talk to your supervisor - discuss how they can help you **reflect** on the families you are working with
- State clearly **what is going to happen** as a direct result of the assessment
- Use simple, concise language - **drop the jargon**
- Create **outcome focused plans** around specific need - link the plan to specific parts of the assessment so that the plan clearly emerges from the analysis
- Have **SMART goals/outcomes** - how will we know we have made a difference
- Keep the **child at the centre** of all interventions