

Practice Hub Quick Guide to the 5 Anchor Principles –

Writing an Analytical and Child-Focused Assessment

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

These principles provide a framework for thinking in assessment, and can be used alongside our assessment tools and relationship-based practice model. Using them will support you to reflect on your practice and develop your understanding of a child’s story, their lived experiences and the potential impact of our intervention on their lives.

**The Five Anchor Principles are:**

* **Why is the assessment being done?**
* **What is the story?**
* **What does the story mean?**
* **What needs to happen?**
* **How will we know we are making progress?**

**What is the story?**

These are the relevant facts, circumstances and events from the child and their family’s lives, and which led to this intervention. This question supports you to consider the journey of a family and the lived experience of the child.

Some questions to consider are:

* Can you tell the story from the viewpoint of the child?
* How have you used the story to make sense of the child’s life?
* How does the story make you feel, and have you thought about how your own past experiences influences the story?

**Why is the assessment being done?**

This helps you to consider what you are assessing and why you are involved in the family’s life. It clarifies the purpose of the assessment for you and the family, and will help you to focus on what information and knowledge you need to assess this particular child’s needs.

Some questions to consider are:

* What are we worried about?
* What might the family/child be worried about?
* What skills and support might you need to complete the assessment?

**What does the story mean?**

At this stage, you will begin to analyse the story using your own practice wisdom and knowledge of the child and their family gained from hearing their voices and understanding their lived experience, including positive experiences as well as trauma. This is where you will begin articulating the relationship between information and experiences.

Some questions to consider are:

* What hypotheses have you developed?
* What is the impact of the story on the child?
* Imagine the child is with you – what would they say about the meaning being made of their life?

**What needs to happen now?**

Plans are now starting to emerge, and rather than thinking *here is the problem, what is the solution?* It will be helpful to think *this is the story, what does this tell us about the need?* This will help you to focus on the child’s needs rather than jumping straight into identifying potential support services. e.g. *the child needs to be in a safe environment where there is no domestic abuse* rather than *referral to domestic abuse service needed.*

Some questions to consider are:

* What would have to happen for this child for you to stop being involved with the child and family?
* What do you think will be the best outcome and why?
* How will this be helpful to the child’s current situation?

**How will we know we are making progress?**

It is important for you to think about what things need to look like in order for professionals to be confident that the child is safe and their needs are being met. It will help to retain a clear focus on the child’s identified needs and the desired outcomes. You should consider what ‘good’ looks like in the life of the child, based on their story, wishes and feelings, and how you and other professionals will know that the family have achieved that.

Some questions to consider are:

* What did you hope would have happened by now?
* What is the child and their family saying?
* Do you have a plan to challenge family or other professionals involved, should there be no positive change for the child?