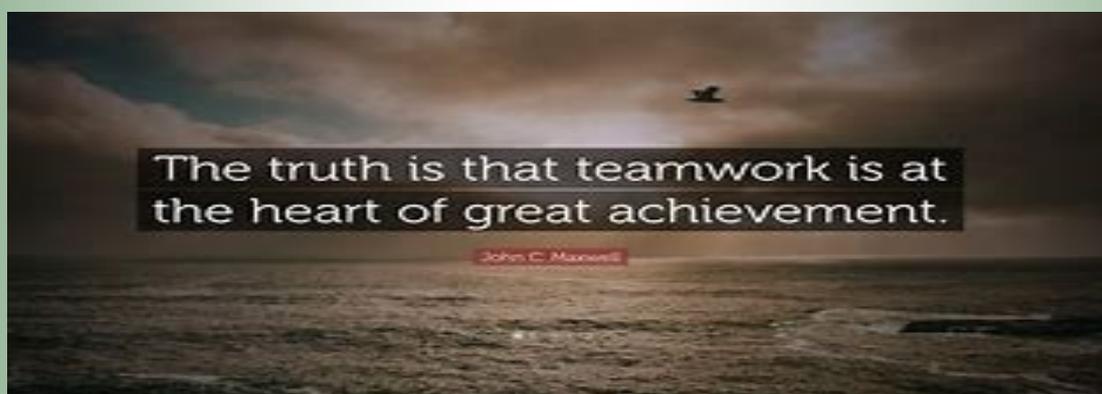


Welcome to May's Edition of the Bulletin

In this month's edition of the bulletin we are continuing to focus on improving practice through our practice focus months and there is an article about chronologies which is the practice focus for May this was originally in one of the bulletins last year but is being revisited.

Also included in this edition is:

- Private fostering update
- Falling through the Gaps - Young women transitioning to the adult justice system.
- Learning from Research — Up against it; Understanding Fathers' Repeat Appearance in Local Authority Care Proceedings
- Learning from complaints and serious case reviews: the use of S.20
- Training and development.



As always please let me know if you want to see something in the bulletin or want to contribute.



Traci Taylor

Principal Social Worker



ON PRACTICE

CHRONOLOGIES

A chronology can be described as a series of events set out in date order; however, the importance of a chronology in work with children, young people and their families is much more than this. It is a vital document that underpins our assessments and is an analytical tool to help us to understand a child's life and experiences and the impact of those experiences. A good chronology will also help us to understand the parent/carers experiences and the impact of those experiences on their parenting of their child.

Chronologies provide a key link in the chain of understanding needs/risks, including the need for protection from harm. The chronology provides a skeleton of key incidents and is a 'sequential story' of significant events in a family's history. It contributes to an emerging picture and allows the practitioner to understand current event in the context of historical information.

Examples of the core elements of a chronology

- Key dates such as dates of birth, life events, moves.
- Facts, such as a child's name placed on the child protection register, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) meeting, adult who is subject to adult protection procedures.
- Transitions, life changes.
- Key professional interventions such as reviews, hearings, tribunals, court disposals.
- A very brief note of an event—for example, a fall down stairs, coming to school with a bruise, a registered sex offender whose car keeps 'breaking down' outside a primary school.
- At the same time, the writer needs to provide enough information for the entry to make sense. Statements like: "...[the individual] behaved inappropriately..." do not necessarily have sufficient detail.
- The actions that were taken. Many chronologies list events and dates but do not have a column which enables the action taken to be recorded or, if no action was taken, to explain why.
- Not opinions – these may be for the case record, but the strength of chronologies lies in their reporting of facts, times, dates and so on

Our Practice Standards sets out the expectation that every open case will have an up to date chronology that is updated at least every 3 months (sooner if there is a significant event).

Our Mandatory workshops on chronologies are running throughout the month of May. The workshops are interactive and designed for discussion and sharing practice. Please make sure that you are



FALLING THROUGH THE GAPS; Young Women Transitioning to the Adult Justice System

Young Women's Justice Project briefing

Girls transitioning from the youth to adult criminal justice system face multiple disadvantages. They have complex, overlapping needs, with their experience of coming into contact with the criminal justice system underpinned by experiences of violence and abuse, poor mental health, addiction, exclusion from education, poverty and having no safe place to call home.

The challenges they face are mutually reinforcing and take place in a wider context of social and structural inequalities which shape their lives, including gender-inequality and racism.

The Young Women's Justice Project provides a national platform to make the case for the needs of young women aged 17–25 in contact with the criminal justice system, including the needs of girls transitioning into adult services as they turn 18. Consistently overlooked in policy, young adult women are a minority in the criminal justice system on account of both their age and gender. Despite pockets of good practice, there is limited provision designed to meet their needs. Engaging with young women, frontline practitioners and other experts, the Young Women's Justice Project is building an evidence-base on key themes in young women's lives. Empowering young women as advocates to safely share their experiences and use their voices to make change, we campaign alongside young women to prevent them falling through the gaps and enable the development of more effective practice through gender and age-informed policy

Evidence suggests that girls (under 18) are more likely to come to the attention of the criminal justice system because of their vulnerability and the risks they face, rather than the severity of their offending.

The full briefing has been sent with this bulletin.



Learning from Complaints

Our learning from internal complaints this month is about our use of Section 20.

The terms of **section 20** of the Children Act 1989 put the onus on the Local Authority to provide accommodation for a child in need in their area who appears to need accommodation because of one or more of the following:

- No person has parental responsibility for them
- They have been lost or been abandoned
- The person who has been caring for the child is prevented permanently or not, from providing him or her with suitable accommodation or care.

Section 20 is often offered as an alternative to the Local Authority applying for a Care Order and asking for the parents to consent to the child living in Local Authority care.

While the details of the complaint do not need sharing the learning outcomes were:

- **the importance of adhering to the timescales of s20 arrangements**

The use of s20 is accepted as good practice in a number of situations and for this situation there is no criticism of the use of it. However, it is really important that we continually review the continued use of the s20 arrangement to ensure that it continues to be appropriate for the child and if not other options are explored.

- **ensuring that decisions are made in a timely way**

s20 arrangements are consent based and it is really important that the review of s20 arrangements are made in conjunction with the adult who has parental responsibility, who can remove s20 at any point. Consideration should always be given to why s20 remains the best option for the child and this rationale should be recorded and shared with the parent within a few days of any meetings/review.

- **the potential consequences of allowing s20 agreements to 'drift' beyond the accepted timescales.**

Most importantly it is not good practice for the child or young person if the agreement is allowed to drift causing delay in the planning. However, additionally by not adhering to tight timescales without any justification or rationale the council leads itself open to heavy criticism and in can incur financial costs.

Points for good practice include :

- Where possible, the agreement of a parent to a section 20 arrangement should be properly recorded in writing and evidenced by the parent's signature.
- The written document should be clear and precise and drafted in simple and straight-forward language that a parent can readily understand.
- The written document should spell out that the parent can "remove the child" from the local authority accommodation "at any time".
- The written document should not seek to impose any fetters of the parent's right to withdraw consent.
- Where the parent is not fluent in English, the written document should be translated into the parent's own language and the parent should sign the foreign language text, adding, in the parent's language, words to the effect that 'I have read this document and I agree to its terms.'

While the complaint in Bradford did not focus on the use of section 20 as a long prelude to care proceedings and the s20 ended (although there was drift and delay in the decision making and action) the above highlights we need to recognise the rights of children and families not to have unnecessary interventions as this is a misuse of our powers.





LESSONS LEARNED FROM SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

This month I am focusing on serious case reviews where chronologies, or lack of one has been the feature.

Examples of inquiries which have promoted the importance of chronologies

For the most part, inquiries into the circumstances surrounding serious child abuse have drawn attention to the importance of chronologies.

The Jay Report (2014) on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham found that there was a chronology in fewer than half the cases looked at (43%) where it would have been appropriate to have one. Most chronologies were out of date, with significant gaps. Professor Jay concluded that: “...It is likely that the absence of structured chronologies contributed to key information being missed when decisions were made”.

Lord Laming, in his report into the death of Victoria Climbié (2004) was unequivocal in stating: “I regard the inclusion in any case file of a clear, comprehensive and up-to-date chronology as absolutely essential”.

In a youth justice context, the follow-up inspection into the management of Colyn Evans (2009) concluded that: “SWIA did not find comprehensive and up-to-date chronologies in any of the files in the sample. Good risk assessment requires detailed and accurate information. For example, the young person referred to in the previous paragraph had assaulted staff in a residential unit on several occasions, and had a long history of abusive behaviour which could have been identified by an accurate chronology”.

The report into the case of Miss X (2004) looked at the case of a woman with learning disabilities who, along with other adults at risk, was seriously abused over a period of years. It recommended that any reviews of social work case records of people with learning disabilities should answer a critical question: “Is there a chronology of significant events and are the implications of these events understood?”



Thank you to everybody who is taking time out of their very busy days to book into the mandatory training sessions and other training. There has been an overwhelming response to training on Harmful Sexual Behaviour and all the sessions are full. We are also planning to run the session on Cumulative Harm and Collaborative Practice which is a partnership event due to the high level of interest.

In addition to the mandatory training on chronologies we continue to hold mop up sessions on all the other mandatory training modules so please check Evolve for the dates. This month there are mandatory training sessions for managers **Supervision for the supervisor**. Please complete the 3 supervision e-learning modules as a prerequisite to completing the virtual workshop.

Next months mandatory training will focus on:

- Signs of Safety
- Voice of the Child
- Life story work (from mid June into July)
- PLO and proceedings for managers

Additionally please make sure that you are registered with

Research in Practice

www.researchinpractice.org.uk

Children's Social Work Matters

www.childrensocialworkmatters.org



As always, please send me your feedback and any suggestions for the bulletins. Contributors are also very welcome.

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Thank you for taking the time out of your busy day to read this bulletin.