**Key questions for the child's social worker**

**Methods**

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

**Learning Outcome**

Review decision-making processes and identify actions you can take to reduce delay in your area of practice.

**Time Required**

A series of 30 minute review and 30 minute reflection sessions with a colleague or supervisor.

**Process**

* How can you ensure that you have a good knowledge and understanding of the impact of maltreatment on children's development? (See Briefings 2, 3 and 4 on Attachment theory, Child development theory and Early brain development and maltreatment for further information)
* How do you and your team ensure that you are making the most of relevant training and development opportunities?
* Do you have a good understanding of thresholds for children’s social care?
* What support do you need to ensure you take timely and decisive action to avoid long-term damaging consequences?

See the Table on pages 46-47 of Brown and Ward’s (2013) review for a [Summary of key timeframes for child development](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200471/Decision-making_within_a_child_s_timeframe.pdf)

* Do you carry out a timely and thorough assessment of the child and family and include historical information (See Briefing 11 on Analysing and using information) . What support do you need to improve this further?
* How do you ensure that you critically analyse and reflect on the information you have gathered?
* Do you set time limited written agreements with parents and proactively monitor compliance with these?
  + What challenges do you face in this, and how could other professionals / agencies help? (See Briefing 8 on *Measuring, monitoring and enabling Parent capacity*).
* Are you confident in challenging unacceptable parental behaviour? What difficulties do you face in this?
  + How could you and your supervisor work together to overcome these difficulties?
* What would help to improve links with professionals in adult services, health, education and the police to ensure that risk factors for abuse and neglect are identified and concerns are acted upon in a timely manner? (See Briefing 10 on Working in a multi-disciplinary team around the child).
* What support do you need to produce evidence for the court that sets out critical key decisions and the rationale behind them and set out the options and recommendations in a clear and reasoned manner?

See Research in Practice: [Evidence matters In Family Justice](http://www.rip.org.uk/publications/handbooks?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&product_id=133&category_id=4)

## **Key questions for social worker managers**

## **Methods**

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor. You will need to have access to a recent case that involved matching.

## **Learning Outcome**

Review decision-making processes and identify actions that you can take to improve them.

## **Time Required**

30 minutes review and 30 minutes reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

Process

Answer the following questions based on your current practice.

* How can you ensure that you have a good knowledge and understanding of the impact of maltreatment on children's development? (See Briefings 2, 3 and 4 on ‘Attachment theory’ ‘Child development theory’ and ‘Early brain development and maltreatment’ for further information).
* Are there good systems in place to manage caseloads and facilitate reflective practice so that social workers are able to make informed and timely decisions? How do you know these systems are effective?
* Do social workers have the practical tools and resources available to take timely action? What else do they need to ensure this?
* Do you provide regular supervision that promotes critical thinking, to improve the quality of defensible decision-making? Is the recording fit for purpose if needed for court proceedings? (See Briefing 7 on ‘Leadership and supervisory competencies’).
* Are you proactive in establishing effective partnerships with other services to facilitate early information sharing?
  + What support do you need from your organisation to further improve these partnerships?

**Key questions for Independent Reviewing Officers**

## **Methods**

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor. You will need to have access to a recent case that involved matching.

## **Learning Outcome**

Review decision-making processes and identify actions that you can take to improve them.

## **Time Required**

30 minutes review and 30 minutes reflection with a colleague or supervisor.

Process

Answer the following questions based on your current practice.

* How can you ensure that you have a good knowledge and understanding of the impact of maltreatment on children's development? (See Briefings 2, 3 and 4 on and ‘Attachment theory’, Child development theory and ‘Early brain development and maltreatment’ for further information).
* What processes are in place to monitor each child's care plan to avoid 'drift'?
  + What difficulties do you encounter here, and how are they overcome?
* How do you ensure that care plans are based on detailed and informed assessments?
* How do you ensure that timely decisions in relation to individual children’s developmental timescales are made?
  + What support do you need to balance the child’s wishes and feelings with the need for timely decision-making?
* How do you bring areas of poor practice in relation to decision-making and planning to the attention of colleagues and senior managers?
  + What support do you need in this respect?

**Case study - Sereta, Tia and Paulo**

**For social workers**

## **Methods**

Suitable for a small group discussion in a team meeting or as part of a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Sereta, Tia and Paulo.

## **Learning Outcome**

To identify the impact of delay in decision-making and assess the support that the foster carers may require to support Sereta, Tia and Paulo.

## **Time Required**

40 minutes for discussion plus 20 minutes for feedback

## Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Sereta, Tia and Paulo and ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Ask the group to read the case study and answer the following questions.

1. What evidence is there of reactive case management?
2. How might the case have been better managed so that an earlier decision to protect the children could have been made?
3. What is the likely impact on the children's well-being of delayed decision-making?
4. How would you support the foster carers to help these children recover from their earlier adversities?

[*Decision-Making Within a Child's Timeframe*](https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/CWRC-00117-2012.pdf) *-* (Brown and Ward 2012) has a number of case study exercises for training to supplement the above (see pp 100-104)

**Case study - Sereta, Tia and Paulo**

**For foster carers and adopters**

## **Methods**

Suitable for a small group discussion in a team meeting or as part of a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Sereta, Tia and Paulo.

## **Learning Outcome**

To identify the impact of delay in decision making and assess the support that the foster carers may require to support Sereta, Tia and Paulo.

## **Time Required**

30 minutes for discussion plus 15 minutes for feedback

## Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Sereta, Tia and Paulo and ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Ask the group to read the case study and answer the following questions.

1. How would you help these children recover from the damage they have suffered? What support would you need to do so?

[Decision Making Within a Child's Timeframe](https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/CWRC-00117-2012.pdf)-(Brown and Ward 2012) has a number of case study exercises for training to supplement the above (see pp 100-104)