

**Child Impact Timeline**

The Child Impact Timeline is a tool designed by practitioners for practitioners.

A Child Impact Timeline can be used to support analysis and understanding of information in all private and public law cases, but can be particularly useful when considering:

* Complex 16.4 cases
* Distinguishing between domestic abuse and harmful conflict (in the absence of clear evidence)
* When taking over a long running case
* Protracted/prolonged proceedings
* Returning/multiple applications
* Determining whether a Finding of Fact Hearing is necessary
* Delayed and long-running proceedings

Child Impact Timelines can support practitioners to:

* Establish patterns of harm/risk/impact and to develop clarity upon underlying issues/risk/impact
* Developing an understanding of the family history and lived experiences and impact on the child
* Establish what support/interventions have been offered/engaged with to aid my consideration as to what further support may be required.
* To support escalation with the Local Authority or highlighting concerns in Safeguarding referrals
* Assisting in the identification of relevant Child Impact Assessment Framework (CIAF) tools to support the assessment of risk/impact

Practitioners have reported that they use Child Impact Timelines:

* During completion of child’s plan/screening stage
* When reviewing previous Cafcass involvement
* Added to as new information is received
* When reviewing Court bundles (particularly when extensive)
* Can be copy and pasted when being used for own purpose and redacted or reworded if being filed with the Court or shared with other experts or parents.

Practitioners have told us that the benefits of using a Child Impact Timeline are:

* Timelines are a useful way of familiarising yourself with a case. They are not necessary in all cases but when there are lots of allegations and a child is lost amongst the adult issues, completing a timeline enables focus of the child and their likely lived experiences.
* Looking for patterns in behaviours or issues assists me in forming recommendations as to what has worked in the past, what hasn’t been attempted and what may be available.
* Timelines help to highlight previous assessments that have already addressed past or re-occurring issues. This enables me to focus on gaps within the information to focus and narrow my assessment and prevents unnecessary duplication.
* Helps to evidence the Golden Thread.
* Timelines support a balanced approach to analysis as they should detail positive changes and engagement as well as concerns and risks.
* Timelines can be used with parents and children (age appropriately) to understand their experiences and views.
* By colour co-ordinating the category of risk issues in line with the CIAF colours, I am quickly able to identify the underlying problems and apply relevant CIAF tools to test my hypothesis.
* It is unlikely that when faced with an extensive bundle that the Judge will be able to read all of the information and will often need to rely upon key documents. These are often put forward by one or both parents’ solicitors. By adding sources and impact/risk we can assist the Court to locate key documents that support our analysis of harm.
* Pieces of information can be extremely significant, despite not appearing so at first glance. When added to a timeline, events and issues can be considered alongside families’ circumstances at that time; this enables a more comprehensive analysis of the wider functioning and context in which events have arisen.

An example of how to use the Child Impact Timeline is below:

Key –

* Domestic Abuse including coercive control
* ehw
* Conflict which is harmful
* ehw
* Child refusal/resistance to spending time with a parent
* ehw
* Other forms of parenting where these are assessed as harmful to the child
* ehw

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| **Date** | **Event** | **Source**  | **Risks identified** | **Child/ren’s views (if known)** | **Impact on Children** | **Outcome** | **Theme/Notes** |
| *Example:**15/11/14* | *Assessment by Local Authority* | *LA Assessment* | *Concerns of domestic abuse reported by mother’s older children D and C ref, father’s physical chastisement, inappropriate and abusive discipline, hearing mother being slapped.*  | *The documents from the LA detail that the children expressed being hurt and frightened by their father.*  | *Children have alleged being exposed to domestic abuse between their parents but also being the subject of physical chastisement and inappropriate methods of discipline.* *The children are likely to have been frightened by this and have spoken out about their lived experience.*  | *Child in Need Plan for 2 months.*  | *Domestic Abuse perpetrated by father.*  |
| *21/12/16* | *Father admitted under S2 to Psychiatric Hospital*  | *Court bundle – C2 Mental Health Assessment*  | *Father’s mental health is unstable, he has been placing himself at risk through self-harm episodes.*  | *Not known.* | *The children’s time with their father has been stopped by their mother. They have been exposed to unpredictable and erratic behaviours from their father, however they have not directly witnessed his self-harming episodes. The children will have been exposed to discourse within their parent’s relationship and an unpredictable and unstable home environment.*  | *No further action from the LA as mother deemed to be protective. Mother agrees that when father is discharged from hospital he will go to live with his parents.*  | *Father experiencing mental health difficulties to the point whereby he is admitted to a psychiatric hospital.*  |
| *15/01/17* | *Father discharged from Psychiatric Hospital with ongoing support from the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)*  | *Court bundle – C2 Mental Health Assessment* | *Father’s mental health has stabilised and he will continue to take medication and be supported within the community by local services.* | *Not known* | *The children are not spending time with their father whilst he continues to work to stabilise his mental health.* | *The children continue to reside with their mother whilst their father concentrates on his recovery.*  | *The father and mother are living separately whilst father receives ongoing support for his mental health.* |
| *06/06/17* | *Parents separate* | *Reported by mother*  | *The mother has ended the relationship with the father.*  | *Not known* | *The children are not spending time with their father. They are residing with their mother.*  | *The children continue to reside with their mother and are not spending any time with their father.* | *The parents have separated.* |
| *08/08/18* | *Father is arrested for beach of the peace.*  | *Police Check dated*  | *Father attended the property where the mother and the children reside. He was under the influence of alcohol and banging on the windows and doors.* | *The LA Child In Need (CIN) assessment does not detail the children’s views or wishes.*  | *The children have not spent any time with their father since he was admitted to the Psychiatric Hospital and the first time they have seen him in 8 months is when he attended their home under the influence of alcohol and behaving aggressively/violently. The children will have been scared by this incident. The incident was significant in that it escalated to the Police being called and arresting their father.*  | *The children have been exposed to a frightening incident but they are still not spending any time with their father.* *The LA undertake a further CIN Assessment.*  | *Concerns about father’s abusive behaviours and use of alcohol.*  |
| *25/01/20* | *Father makes an application to the court for a Child Arrangements Order (CAO) to spend time with the children.*  | *ChildFirst Record* | *Safeguarding Letter identifies that father has not spent time with the children for over 4 years. Risks relate to father’s unstable Mental Health (diagnosis of unstable personality disorder) and father’s use of alcohol. Mother reports that the children do not want to spend any time with their father because they are scared of him*  | *Not known at this stage in proceedings.*  | *The children have not seen or spent time with their father for approx. 4 years. This is an important relationship in their life that has been damaged by father’s mental health difficulties and associated behaviours. They are reportedly not wanting to spend any time with their father because they are scared of him. It will be important to ascertain the children’s wishes and feelings to understand their lived experiences better.*  | *Cafcass to complete S7 Report.* | *Private law proceedings initiated. The children are refusing to spend time with their father. Risks relate to father’s MH and alcohol use.*  |
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**FCA’s Analysis arising from the timeline**

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| * The use of the tool has highlighted risk relating to parental mental health and domestic abuse. The colour coded themes present a clear and reoccurring issue relating to mental health related issues
* It is apparent that there is no pattern of domestic abuse.
* The outcome of each situation is clearly recorded, this has enabled me to establish what interventions have been undertaken to address the associated risks as highlighted by the impact on the children section.
* This will assist in forming recommendations for next steps and recording my rationales for the recommendations
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