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safeguarders panel

Investigation, Analysis and Professional Decision-Making

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Welcome and Introductions

Housekeeping

Background

Aims and ethos of the training

Introductions and learning agreement

Programme outline

10am – welcome and introductions

Gathering information: "investigating" the child's world

11.30 – Tea break

Analysis: understanding what it's like to be this child

12.45 – 1.30pm - lunch

Reaching conclusions: being independent and accountable

4pm - End

Assessment criteria

- Keep central focus on the child

- Fulfil responsibilities as required in the role

- Work effectively as an individual and alongside others connected to the role

- Communicate purposefully, effectively and respectfully (core competence to communicate with children)

- Assimilate and analyse information to make clear, reasoned and justifiable recommendations

- Continue personal development relevant to the role by meaningful self-reflection and engagement with learning and development

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Gathering information: "investigating" the child's world

Different sources of information

The role of the safeguarder

"The safeguarder's role is to investigate, assess, analyse, recommend and report – all to safeguard the interests of the child. The safeguarder critically reviews information available and evidence gathered, to enable the safeguarder to make a reasoned and justifiable recommendation about what is in the interests of a child" (p12)

Safeguarder's Panel (2016)

"Information" and "evidence"

Five minutes quick think: On a sheet of flipchart paper, each group write down the most important sources of information and evidence for safeguarders

Pass you sheet to the table next to you.

"Information" and "evidence" – part 2

Critical reflection: Look at your colleagues' notes.

Are there any commonalities or differences in relation to your own notes?

What are you thinking now about the challenges of critically reviewing information available and evidence gathered?

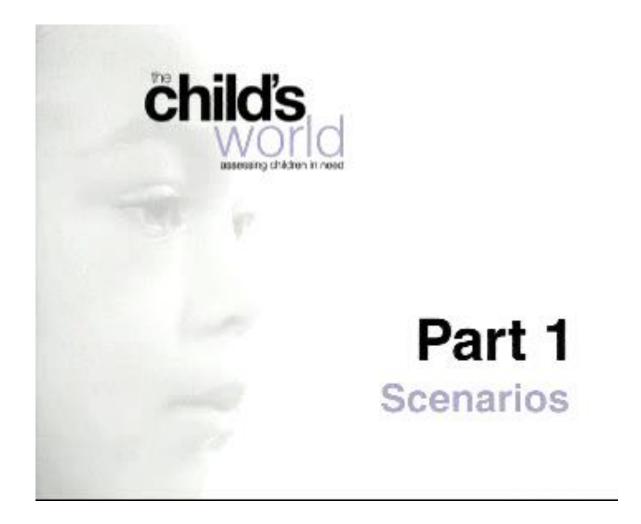UNIVERSITY of STIRLING

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Gathering information in the home visit

In this clip Lorraine and her children, Lee and Shane, are receiving a duty visit from a social worker.

The home visit is a crucial element of practice for Safeguarders as well as social workers and health visitors

Watch the video and take notes of any information which you feel may be "relevant".

the **child's** world
assessing children in need

Part 1
Scenarios

In pairs

- Compare your notes and discuss what you considered to be relevant information and evidence.

- Identify areas where you noticed different things or interpreted them differently.

- Note them down and discuss what might underpin these differences

In groups

Identify the kinds of information and sources of information which you have most commonly identified as relevant. Critically reflect on the significance of your findings for the Safeguarder role.

Child-Centered Practice

17. Child not wanting or unable to express views. If a child is not able or does not want to express their views and wishes verbally to you, then you may be able to obtain some of their feelings and wishes by other means. You will need to say in your report how you obtained any views included.

Communicating with children

"It is not the child's responsibility to communicate their needs. It is the practitioner's duty to listen and use the means of communication and engagement that best allow the individual child to express his or her lived experience and needs…" p.56

Helm, D. (2010) *Making Sense of Child and Family Assessment: How to interpret children's needs.* London, Jessica Kingsley.

Engagement with children and young people

Importance of direct interaction

- **Time**
- **Place/space**
- **Relationship**
- **People**

Protecting children and Young People:
The Charter

The clear message from children and young people is:

As children and young people, we have a right to be protected and be safe from harm from others. When we have difficulties or problems we expect you to:

Get to know us

Speak with us

Listen to us

Take us seriously

Involve us

Respect our privacy

Be responsible to us

Think about our lives as a whole

Think carefully about how you use information about us

Put us in touch with the right people

Use your power to help

Make things happen when they should

Help us be safe

This is a message to all of us – politicians, communities, parents, families, neighbours; as well as police, health, social work, and education authorities; and people who work directly with children and young people – about what is important to them and how we go about helping to protect them.

pr**o**tecting

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Analysis: understanding what it's like to be this child

What is analysis?

"**The ability to break down the different elements within the family situation and the wider community, in order to understand the relationship between the various factors that are impacting on the child, the weight to give to each factor and how they might be changed or influenced. Using information intelligently and constructing a narrative and hypotheses which can be tested and retested...**"

Munro, E. (2010) *The Munro Review of Child Protection. Part One: A Systems Analysis.* (p.53)

Description vs. Analysis
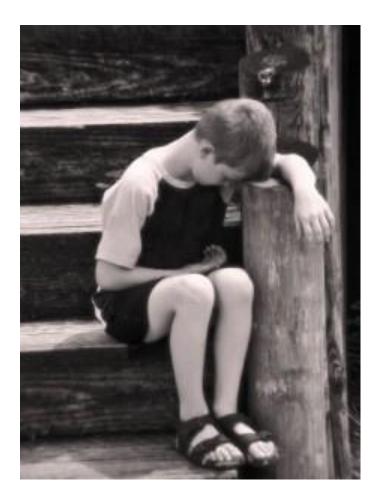
Take a sweet

In pairs – describe the sweet

now *analyse* the sweet

In large group – what made it trickier to analyse the sweet than describe it?

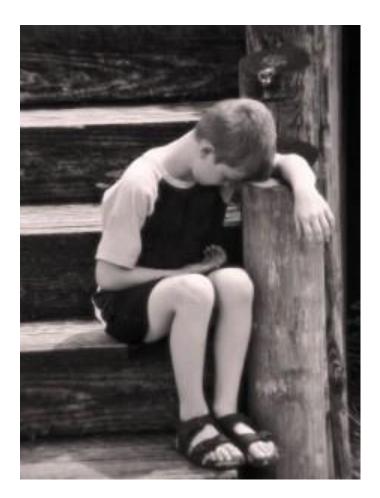You may eat the sweet (if you haven't already)

Description : What do you see here?

Analysis: What sense do you make of this?

Description vs. Analysis

Poorer reports were characterised by…a lack of analysis.

Instead, there was:

Presenting views and issues

Restating

Repeating

Replicating

So what can stand in the way of analysis?

- Lack of time
- Overwhelming complexity
- Not appreciating the nature of the task
- Not knowing
- Not knowing how
- Knowing but not being able to explain how (tacit knowledge)
- Lacking confidence
- Wicked learning environments

Safeguarder analysis should include…

Checking

Triangulating

Evaluating

Weighing

Relating

Reaching conclusions: being independent and accountable

Reaching conclusions

Address the question **"So what?"**

So what does all this tell me about this child's lived experience?

So what should we make of all the available information?

 So what should we do?

Making recommendations: professional expertise and independent safeguarders

Thirty records (60%) sought specific information and a recommendation (for example as to nature, frequency and duration) on contact arrangements and 17 (34%) on residence (for example the suitability of the child's current placement).

In this research, safeguarders usually agreed with social work recommendation. Disagreement was commonly in relation to an aspect of contact or residence.

Safeguarder independence

What is it?

- Independent of others (e.g. Social worker, Reporter, parents)
- "The eyes and ears of the Sheriff"
- Current
- Impartial report and recommendation
- Inherent in the role
- Complete
- New to the picture
- Observer (contact)
- Freelance
- Seen to be by families

What is it not?

- Being influenced by resources, workload, policy)
- Being in conflict
- Partial
- Adversarial
- Having an entrenched position
- Writing to please Children 1st
- Unquestioningly accepting
- Having vested interests
- Lacking objectivity
- Failing to scrutinise

No-one is an island

"The safeguarder role is a relationship-based role that depends on sound communication and working independently but collaboratively with others where possible" (p9 Safeguarders Panel 2016)

- Who might these "others" be?
- How can safeguarders maintain boundaries between collaboration and independence?

In one case, the social worker had recommended that contact take place in the community rather than on social work premises (in accordance with the child's express wish). The safeguarder's view, based on potential risks and security issues, was that the contact should continue to be supervised within social work offices. In another case, the safeguarder opposed a social work recommendation for a reduction in, and ultimate termination of, contact with the parents and in a third, the safeguarder recommended reestablishment of contact against a social work view that improvements in the mother's lifestyle had not been sustained for long enough to warrant this.

Independence: Some challenges...

Understanding and managing emotions

Developing and testing hypotheses

Expertise and criticality

Identifying and managing biases

Review of today's work

Gathering information: "investigating" the child's world

Analysis: understanding what it's like to be this child

Reaching conclusions: being independent and accountable

End

Evaluation

Further resources

Contact – duncan.helm@stir.ac.uk

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