

Topic 11

Analysing and Using Information to Inform Decision Making

Key Messages

- All professionals working with looked after children need sound analytical skills to make sense of information gathered and inform decision making.
- They need to demonstrate a curiosity about children and family's wishes and behaviour, alongside the use of research evidence and professional judgement to inform decision making in a timely manner.
- Assessments must go beyond mere description to being analytical – resources that help staff structure their thinking, analyse information and formulate plans based on the needs of the child are especially helpful. Skills and techniques such as the building and testing of hypotheses reduce the risk of fixing on one (incorrect) analysis when trying to make sense of complex or conflicting material.
- As the Munro Review (2011) highlighted, the demands of management and inspection processes can, at times, act to impede the ability of professionals to analyse information and exercise their professional judgment.
- Analytical and reflective thinking places practical and emotional demands on the practitioner and may put them at odds with the views of their colleagues. The culture of an organisation is important – does it support analytical thinking and is it able to remain open to learning from situations?

Care proceedings

This briefing follows key stages of a child's journey into fostering and/or adoption. At each stage of the process, information and decision making needs to support permanence – the provision of high-quality and stable care that supports a child's sense of identity and belonging (Boddy, 2013).

When assessing children and families, social workers need to draw on core areas of knowledge such as child development and attachment theory, as well as the impact of parental problems such as parental substance misuse and domestic violence (Trevithick, 2008; Munro, 2011). Knowledge alone is not enough, however. In order to make well-evidenced decisions and recommendations, the social worker needs to think critically about which evidence is relevant to the child and family's circumstances, and apply it (Turney, 2014; Munro, 2011). Skills and techniques such as the building and testing of hypotheses reduce the risk of fixing on one (incorrect) analysis when trying to make sense of complex and sometimes conflicting material (Turney, 2014).

The vital importance of considering all realistic options for permanence when preparing for court proceedings is underlined by the Court of Appeal judgement handed down in summer 2013 ([Re B-S](#)). The judgment is clear that proper evidence

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must contain an analysis of the arguments for and against each permanence option and a fully reasoned recommendation.

See the joint letter from ADCS and CAFCASS [About the implications of recent Appeal Court judgments for social work case analysis in the Family Courts](#)

In the family court, the CAFCASS guardian is required to evaluate whether the local authority care plan will meet the child's needs. The guardian will examine the local authority case and provide the court with an analysis of what is in the best interests of the child. A children's guardian's threshold analysis is a root cause analysis of the child's needs, whether those needs are being met, the significant harm this is causing or is likely to cause, and whether the parenting capacity gap may be bridged or not.

The children's guardian will identify risks as well as the strengths in the family situation. Risks will frequently emerge from incidence of domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health problems, and the impact of learning disability upon parenting capacity. Children's guardians should make full use of the research outcomes described in the publication *Decision Making within a child's timeframe* (Brown and Ward 2012).

The Family Justice Review (Norgrove, 2011), Brandon et al's analyses of serious case reviews (Brandon et al, 2008; 2011; 2012) and Ofsted inspection reports have all highlighted a common weakness in social work assessments – that they do not contain enough information, or the information they do have has not been analysed sufficiently to develop an effective action plan. Poor assessments and reports will be rejected by the courts, resulting in delay, and the increased risk of negative outcomes associated with delay (see Briefing 6 on the [Impact and avoidance of delay in decision making](#)). Good assessments, on the other hand, are linked to better outcomes for children in terms of reunification or finding suitable stable placements (Turney et al, 2011).

An assessment needs to go beyond being descriptive to being analytical. So approaches and resources that help staff to structure their thinking, analyse the information provided and formulate plans based on the child's needs are helpful. *The Anchor Principles: A framework for analytical thinking* is one such approach (Brown et al, 2012). It sets out a five-question framework to support analytical thinking:

- 1. What is the purpose of the assessment?** This is vital in order to direct the assessment and ensure you focus on the right issues.

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2. **What's the story?** This involves constructing a narrative that looks at the links between background history and current circumstances, incorporating the views of different family members and professionals.
3. **What does the story mean?** This stage involves analysing and evaluating the information and reflecting on what this tells you about the needs of the child. The documenting needs to 'show your working out' – ie how the analysis led to and supports your conclusions.
4. **What needs to happen?** You draw on your understanding of the child's needs and story to establish, ideally in negotiation with the family, the outcomes that need to be achieved and the actions required to achieve them.
5. **How will we know we're making progress?** Having clear, measurable and specific outcomes that are linked directly to identified needs enables progress to be measured, and the plan to be adjusted if necessary.

This approach can be adapted in relation to the Public Law Outline:

1. What's the assessment/analysis for? – **Statement**
2. What's the story? – **Chronology**
3. What does the story mean? – **Analysis**
4. What needs to happen? – **Plan**
5. How will we know if we're making progress? – **Review**

Matching

'Becoming "looked after" is just one aspect of complex identity and experience. There is a need to recognise the diversity and individuality of children who become looked after, and to take account of their characteristics and needs ... Permanence depends on securing the right placement for the right child at the right time' (Boddy, 2013).

In making plans to secure permanence, children need a differentiated response that takes into account the complex range of characteristics and needs that make up every individual. These will include aspects of identity such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, health and disability, religious and cultural identities. Professionals need to be clear how a placement decision will contribute to the child or young person finding 'a secure base, either in care or in the community' (Boddy, 2013). Older children and young people entering care may have more challenging needs and have a higher risk of placement instability (Biehal et al, 2009). It is important to consider the permanence needs of older children – they may have suffered significant harm over a number of years, may be harder to support or match and so present a particular challenge in terms of finding stable support within the looked after system (Boddy, 2013).

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Children's wishes and feelings

In *Fostering Now*, Sinclair (2005) emphasises the central importance of children's wishes being taken into account when matching with foster carers in order to support a good 'chemistry' and fit. This might involve consideration of how the child feels about whether other children are in the placement, or whether or not they are placed with siblings (Sinclair, 2005). Where adoption is an option, there is a need 'to understand from children's point of view what impact adoption makes in terms of their experience of family membership and their sense of personal and family identity' (Neil, 2012, cited in Boddy, 2013).

A child's relationships with birth parents, siblings and other family members will all have implications for matching, alongside carers' views and ability to support contact where appropriate.

Analysis in relation to ethnicity

Decisions need to be scrutinised to guard against bias in relation to ethnicity. For example, black Caribbean children are statistically more likely to experience residential care than children from other ethnic groups (Owen and Statham, 2009) and black and Asian children may spend longer being looked after before being recommended for adoption (Selwyn et al, 2008).

Matching requires that professionals develop a sophisticated understanding of how each individual child and family's ethnicity may influence a placement and sense of belonging. A recent study concluded that it was unhelpful to refer to 'mixed ethnicity' children as a community or meaningful group due to the diversity of ethnic heritages (Selwyn et al, 2008). Research (Thoburn et al, 2000) suggests that whether a placement is 'matched' or 'trans-racial' does not influence stability although 'black and Asian families may have an advantage over white families in preparing children to cope with racism and to grow up with a sense of pride in their appearance and heritage. However, with appropriate selection and support, some white families can successfully parent ethnic minority children, especially those living in ethnically diverse communities.' (Thoburn et al, 2000, cited in Sinclair, 2005) Professionals need to consider whether carers are able and willing to support a child's ethnic and culture needs to nurture a positive identity and self-esteem. As with other aspects of identity, the analysis in relation to ethnicity needs to focus on the specific needs of individual children and young people.

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Analysis in relation to attachment styles

When making an assessment of adopters or foster carers, the supervising social worker will need to understand the adopters or carers' own attachment histories to see how this could support or undermine a match. Successful foster placements are associated with carers being 'child-orientated' and able to handle disturbed attachment behaviour from the child without making the child feel rejected (Sinclair et al, 2004, cited in Sinclair, 2005). The professional team needs to be open-minded and curious about what attachment dynamics are present and how they might play out in the placement. For example, what are the child and the carers' own attachment styles, and what challenges or opportunities do they present for the placement? Does the carer (or the carers) have any issues of unresolved loss that may make it difficult for a close bond to be forged?

Looked after child reviews

Looked after child (LAC) reviews provide the opportunity to review existing information, gather more information and critically review it to support decision making. Care planning is an ongoing process that takes into account the ages and stages of child development. A team of professionals, the child (where appropriate) and carers are all involved in LAC reviews, with the independent reviewing officer (IRO) responsible for monitoring a child's case on an ongoing basis. Quality of care is central to LAC reviews for all placements – this includes kinship care placements, which research suggests are not always monitored sufficiently (Hunt et al, 2008).

From 2014, the IRO monitoring and scrutiny function will become even more important in light of the expectation that the courts will focus on the core issues and the permanence plan and that there may be reduced scrutiny of care plans by the courts. However, the degree to which IROs undertake ongoing monitoring and active scrutiny of care plans has been questioned (Arnold, 2011; Jelcic et al, 2013; Ofsted, 2013). IROs need to use analytical skills and evidence-informed practice to help them (where necessary) challenge decisions made by local authority colleagues and other professionals. Strong analytical skills can support IROs to scrutinise and challenge colleagues in the best interest of the child, even where this feels uncomfortable. There may be conflicting accounts or information provided by the child, carer, family and professional group at the LAC review. Taking an analytical approach requires those involved to consider what these different accounts mean to achieving permanency for the child.

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Analysis for reunification

‘Reunification should be planned with a view to permanence – approached with caution and with concern to ensure the qualities of “the best possible care” that we should seek for every child.’ (Boddy, 2013)

For the majority of children who become looked after, return home will be the most likely pathway to permanence. However, many children who return home experience further neglect or abuse and re-admittance to care (Farmer and Lutman, 2010). Wade and colleagues (2011) found that only one third of maltreated children who were returned home were able to remain at home continuously over the next four years. And 81 per cent of children reunited with parents who were still misusing drugs subsequently re-entered care or accommodation.

Professionals need to guard against over-optimism through careful planning and support. This requires:

- a clear analysis of birth parents’ capacity to make and sustain change in relation to the issues that led to the child’s entry into care/accommodation
- analysis of whether well-targeted support has been provided and engaged with by the birth parent(s), and whether sufficient time has elapsed for the problems to have been addressed
- planning and implementation of ongoing evidence-informed and family-centred support.

Analysis and contact

The LAC review will also consider issues of family involvement and contact, with the primary imperative for decision making being *what is in the best interests of this individual child or young person?* Birth family involvement while a child is in care can have a range of benefits (Guerts et al, 2012) and LAC reviews need to consider whether the child’s plan supports parental involvement, where this is appropriate. Equally, contact should be supportive and take account of the individual needs of the child (Boddy, 2013). Contact needs to be thought about in terms of what the aims are and how and why family members are involved in the child’s life (Boddy et al., 2013). Thinking about contact through a permanence lens can shape decision making. For example, where there is a planned reunification, contact should support involvement in everyday life. Where adoption or long-term foster care is the arrangement, in most cases kin networks will need to be recognised (see [Briefing 15 Managing the risks and benefits of contact](#)).

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Barriers and supports to analytical thinking and decision making

Turney's literature review (2014) highlights some key aspects of analysis and critical thinking and those factors that may support or impede its application:

- Analytical and reflective thinking is not easy and creates practical and emotional demands on the practitioner. It may lead them to challenge the status quo and put them at odds with the views of their colleagues.
- Social workers need effective support and supervision to help them reflect, think critically and analyse information in complex and often hostile contexts.
- Organisations need to pay careful attention to the 'systems' that surround individuals in order to identify whether they support the use of information and analytical skills.
- The culture of an organisation is important – does it support analytical thinking and decision making, and is it able to remain open to learning from situations? This type of approach takes time to develop and is not always allied to a culture driven by performance indicators.

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Signposts to further reading

Cottrell S (2011) *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing effective analysis and argument*. (2nd edition) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Crisp B, Anderson M, Orme J and Green Lister P (2003) *Knowledge Review 1: Learning and Teaching in Social Work Education – Assessment*. London: [SCIE](#)

Holland S (2010) *Child and Family Assessment in Social Work Practice*. (2nd edition) London: Sage Publications

Munro E (2008) *Effective Child Protection*. (2nd edition) London: Sage Publications

Turney D, Platt D, Selwyn J and Farmer E (2011) *Improving Child and Family Assessments: Turning research into practice*. London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publisher

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Analysing and using information

research
in practice



1

Fostering
and Adoption

research
in practice



Learning objectives

- To identify how analysis should inform decision making in:
 - Care proceedings
 - Matching
 - LAC reviews
 - Reunification
 - Contact

2

Fostering
and Adoption

research
in practice



Care proceedings

- Weak assessments are associated with a lack of information and/or insufficient analysis
- The Anchor principles (Brown, Moore and Turney 2012) set out a five-question framework to support analytical assessments
 - What is the purpose of the assessment?
 - What is the story?
 - What does the story mean?
 - What needs to happen?
 - How will we know if we are making progress?

3

Fostering
and Adoption

research
in practice



Matching

- Individual children need a differentiated response when making plans to secure permanence
- Children's views are central to successful matching
- Decisions need to be scrutinised to guard against bias in relation to ethnicity
- Professionals need to explore whether carers can support a child's ethnic and cultural needs
- Professionals need to understand an adopters'/carers' own attachment history

4

Fostering
and Adoption

research
in practice



LAC Reviews

- Care planning: an ongoing process taking into account the ages and stages of child development
- Quality of care central to LAC reviews for all placements, including kinship care
- IRO's scrutiny function is becoming increasingly important and requires skills to challenge colleagues
- An analytical approach involves considering what different and potentially conflicting accounts mean to achieving permanency for the child

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Fostering
and Adoption

research
in practice



Reunification

- Most common pathway to permanence for LAC
- Approach with caution – many children return into care after further neglect or abuse
- Over-optimism needs to be guarded against and supported by:
 - assessments of parental capacity to change
 - whether support provided has been engaged with
 - if there is ongoing and evidenced informed family-centred support

6

Contact

- LAC reviews need to consider whether the child's plan supports parental involvement, where this is appropriate
- Contact should be supportive and take account of the individual needs of the child
- What are the aims of contact and how and why family members are involved in the child's life (Boddy et al., 2013)
- Thinking about contact through a permanence lens can help shape decision making

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References

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Biehal N, Ellison S, Baker C and Sinclair I (2009) *Characteristics, Outcomes and Meanings of Three Types of Permanent Placement – Adoption by strangers, adoption by carers and long-term foster care*. (DCSF Research Brief DCSF-RBX-09-11) London: [DCSF](#)

Boddy J (2013) *Understanding Permanence for Looked After Children: A review of research for the Care Inquiry*. London: [The Care Inquiry](#)

Brandon M, Belderson P, Warren C, Howe D, Gardner R, Dodsworth J and Black J (2008) *Analysing Child Deaths and Serious Injury through Abuse and Neglect: What can we learn? A biennial analysis of serious case reviews 2003-2005*. (Research Report DCSF-RR023) London: [DCSF](#)

Brandon M, Sidebotham P, Bailey S and Belderson P (2011) *A Study of Recommendations Arising from Serious Case Reviews 2009-2010*. (Research Report DFE-RR157) London: [Department for Education](#)

Brandon M, Sidebotham P, Bailey S, Belderson P, Hawley C, Ellis C and Megson M (2012) *New Learning from Serious Case Reviews: A two year report for 2009-2011*. (Research Report DFE-RR226) London: [Department for Education](#)

Brown L, Moore S and Turney D (2012) *Analysis and Critical Thinking in Assessment*. Dartington: [Research in Practice](#)

Farmer E and Lutman E (2010) *Case Management and Outcomes for Neglected Children Returned to their Parents: A five year follow-up study*. (DCSF Research Brief DCSF-RB214) London: [DCSF](#)

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Hunt J, Waterhouse S and Lutman E (2008) *Keeping them in the Family: Outcomes for children placed in kinship care through care proceedings*. London: BAAF

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Ofsted (2013) *Independent Reviewing Officers: Taking up the challenge?* Manchester: [Ofsted](#)

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Thoburn J, Norford L and Rashid S (2000) *Permanent Family Placement for Children of Minority Ethnic Origin.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

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Turney D (forthcoming) *Analysis and Critical Thinking in Assessment: Literature review.* Dartington: Research in Practice

Turney D, Platt D, Selwyn J and Farmer E (2011) *Social Work Assessment of Children in Need: What do we know? Messages from research.* (DFE-RBX-10-08) London: [Department for Education](#)

Wade J, Biehal N, Farrelly N and Sinclair I (2011) *Caring for Abused and Neglected Children: Making the right decisions for reunification or long-term care.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

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Key questions in care proceedings for the child's social worker

Methods

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

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the use of analysis in care proceedings.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved care proceedings and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How has the child's voice been listened to and considered during care proceedings?
- How has the impact of age and early developmental experiences been considered in drafting the care plan?
- How analytical is the court report?
 - What additional analysis could be included?
- How does the report break down the case into its constituent parts and explore the relationship between them?
- What actions do you need to take to ensure these areas are addressed?

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Analysing and Using Information to Inform Decision Making

Key questions in care proceedings for the social work manager

Methods

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

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the use of analysis in care proceedings.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved care proceedings and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How has the impact of age and early developmental experiences been considered in drafting the care plan?
- How analytical is the court report?
 - What additional analysis could be included?
- How does the report break down the case into its constituent parts and explore the relationship between them?
- To what extent does the plan flow from the court assessment and how has the author shown how they have arrived at this decision?
- What actions do you need to take to ensure these areas are addressed?

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Key questions in care proceedings for the independent reviewing officer

Methods

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

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the use of analysis in care proceedings.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved care proceedings and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How has the child's voice been listened to and considered during care proceedings?
- How analytical is the court report?
 - What additional analysis could be included?
- How does the report break down the case into its constituent parts and explore the relationship between them?
- What actions do you need to take to ensure these areas are addressed?

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Key questions for matching for the child's social worker

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

To identify and assess the use of analysis and information in matching.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved matching and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- What is the plan for permanency at this stage?
 - How does it take account of the child's age, stage of development and harm they have suffered?
 - Does it include an assessment of the child's resilience and demonstrate how the plan supports this?
- How have the child's wishes been taken into account?
 - How is this evidenced?
- Is there a good fit/chemistry between the child and carer?
 - How has that been analysed and evidenced?
- How has the child's ethnicity been considered in relation to matching?
 - Have ethnic and placement biases shown in research been guarded against?
- If residential care is planned for, how does this support the child's sense of permanency?

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Key questions for matching for the supervising social worker

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

To identify and assess the use of analysis and information in matching.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved matching and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- What is the plan for permanency at this stage?
 - How does it take account of the child's age, stage of development and harm they have suffered?
 - Does it include an assessment of the child's resilience and demonstrate how the plan supports this?
- Is there a good fit/chemistry between the child and carer?
 - How has that been analysed and evidenced?
- What is the quality of foster care likely to be?
 - To what extent do the foster carers show signs of being able to reflect and empathise with the child and accept them for who they are? (Schofield and Beek, 2005; Biehal et al, 2009)

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Key questions for matching for the social work manager

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

To identify and assess the use of analysis and information in matching.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved matching and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- What is the plan for permanency at this stage?
 - How does it take account of the child's age, stage of development and harm they have suffered?
 - Does it include an assessment of the child's resilience and demonstrate how the plan supports this?
- How has the child's ethnicity been considered in relation to matching?
 - Have ethnic and placement biases shown in research been guarded against?
- To what extent has the supervising social worker undertaken a thorough assessment of the carer's own attachment history?
- To what extent do the carers show sufficient evidence of being 'child-orientated'?

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Key questions for matching for the independent reviewing officer

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

To identify and assess the use of analysis and information in matching.

Time Required

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

Process

Review a recent case that involved matching and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How have the child's wishes been taken into account?
 - How is this evidenced?
- How has the child's ethnicity been considered in relation to matching?
 - Have ethnic and placement biases shown in research been guarded against?
- To what extent has the supervising social worker undertaken a thorough assessment of the carer's own attachment history?
- To what extent do the carers show sufficient evidence of being 'child-orientated'?
- If residential care is planned for, how does this support the child's sense of permanency?

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Key questions for LAC reviews for the child's social worker

Methods

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor. You will need to have access to a recent looked after children (LAC) review.

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the extent to which analysis and information have been used in reviews of looked after children.

Time Required

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

Process

Study a recent LAC review and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How do the child or young person's individual characteristics influence what is needed to achieve permanence?
- Are the necessary resources in place, particularly in friends and family care, to support permanence?
 - What additional resources are required?
- To what extent do the contact arrangements support the child to build a sense of belonging and identity within their own setting?
 - How do they support the nurturing of multiple relationships?

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Key questions for LAC reviews for the supervising social worker

Methods

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor. You will need to have access to a recent looked after children (LAC) review.

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the extent to which analysis and information have been used in reviews of looked after children.

Time Required

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

Process

Study a recent LAC review and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How do the child or young person's individual characteristics influence what is needed to achieve permanence?
- To what extent do the contact arrangements support the child to build a sense of belonging and identity within their own setting?
 - How do they support the nurturing of multiple relationships?

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Analysing and Using Information to Inform Decision Making

Key questions for LAC reviews for the independent reviewing officer

Methods

Suitable for self-directed learning or reflection with a colleague or supervisor. You will need to have access to a recent looked after children (LAC) review.

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the extent to which analysis and information have been used in reviews of looked after children.

Time Required

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

Process

Study a recent LAC review and assess the extent to which the following areas have been addressed:

- How do the child or young person's individual characteristics influence what is needed to achieve permanence?
- Are the necessary resources in place, particularly in friends and family care, to support permanence?
 - What additional resources are required?
- To what extent have professionals and carers shown curiosity and open-mindedness about the child's wishes and feelings?
 - Have they been listened to and, if so, how have their wishes and feelings been acted upon?
 - If it is not possible to act upon the child's wishes, has the rationale been clearly explained?
- To what extent do the contact arrangements support the child to build a sense of belonging and identity within their own setting?
 - How do they support the nurturing of multiple relationships?

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Child centred contact options

Methods

Suitable for a group discussion during a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Toby.

Learning Outcome

To identify a range of child-centred contact options.

Time Required

30 minutes plus 20 minutes for feedback.

Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Toby. Ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Toby

Read the case study and consider the range of contact options available for Toby after he is placed for adoption with Leann, Ted and Bev.

What does research and your own experience tell you about what support might be needed for the people involved in order to ensure contact is designed and implemented in a child-centred, proportionate and supportive way?

Consider also how Toby's cultural and ethnic heritage will be supported and his sense of identity nurtured in his new adoptive home.

How will this information be collected, analysed and presented to Will and Tom?

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Using information to support matching and permanence

Methods

Suitable for a group discussion during a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Sereta, Tia and Paulo.

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the information required to support matching and achieve permanence for children.

Time Required

40 minutes plus 20 minutes for feedback.

Process

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

Sereta Tia and Paulo

Read the case study and consider what further information may be needed before formal matching takes place. What support might be needed in the short and long term for the foster carers in order for them to help the children develop and achieve permanence?

What are the key issues you would expect to be reflected on and discussed in supervision between the children's social worker and his or her manager?

What does research tell us about the impact of parental substance misuse and how can the negative impact be mitigated in contact between the children and their mother?

What support might be needed for the children (and other family members) to achieve a sense of stability and negotiate the complexities of family identity, given that they live near their birth mother?

Topic 11

Analysing and Using Information to Inform Decision Making

Using information to support contact and protection

Methods

Suitable for a group discussion during a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Rosie.

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess the information required to support contact and how information can be shared between agencies to protect children.

Time Required

40 minutes plus 20 minutes for feedback.

Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Rosie. Ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Rosie

Read the case study and consider how the child's social worker and supervising social worker work together and with Lena to support Andrea in keeping Rosie safe, and in setting and maintaining boundaries around contact and behaviour generally?

Consider what the research messages tell us about what interventions are effective to prevent against sexual exploitation. How will information need to be shared between different agencies, Andrea and Lena to keep Rosie safe?

How can the high level of risk and unpredictability be appropriately contained by those involved in order to ensure that the care plan is shaped by high-quality thinking and reflection?

Topic 11

Analysing and Using Information to Inform Decision Making

Using information to support reunion contact and permanency

Methods

Suitable for a group discussion during a facilitated workshop. Individuals will need a copy of the case study for Dillon.

Learning Outcome

To identify and assess information to support permanence.

Time Required

40 minutes plus 20 minutes for feedback.

Process

Give each group a hand-out of the case study for Dillon. Ask each group to appoint someone to feedback their ideas.

Dillon

Read the case study and consider what work needs to be done with Dillon, his mother, Brian and Jennifer to support positive reunion contact. How does this initial contact inform part of a wider plan for permanence for Dillon?

What implications do Brian and Jennifer's ages and Dillon's stage of development have for the long-term foster placement?

Consider the attachment histories of each party involved and how this may influence contact and plans for permanence.

What specialist information about Dillon's disabilities might the child's social worker and supervising social worker need in order to plan for contact as a means of achieving a sense of belonging for Dillon?