PRACTICE TIPS – DIVERSITY

This set of documents have been put together to assist SW in the daily WHAT and HOW of their work.

The aim being to provide a quick overview of a topic with signposts to links that may help if you are unsure.

This Document is in draft form, as the views and comments of practitioners is being sought prior to document finalisation.

These Documents will be reviewed in Feb 2019 and finalised in March 2019.

These documents set out some ideas for SG to consider in terms of Guidance for practitioners which will -

* standardise practice, - consistency and quality
* develop learning culture on what works and why
* Develop the ability to look at impact – better understanding of the childs experience
* Provide an evidence-based tool
* Enable decision making to be more timely
* Children’s outcomes to be more specific in terms of their experiences

WHAT IS DIVERSITY? (NOT the Dance Troup!)

Working with Diversity is understanding the uniqueness of individuals and their differences. These may be race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, Identity, age, physical and/or mental ability, religious belief, culture, customs, heritage and lifestyles. – Anything that makes us unique

WHY THINK ABOUT DIVERSITY?

Respecting Diversity is the cornerstone to Social Work. Valuing and recognising difference, shows cultural awareness and sensitivity. This enables intervention to be people focused, reflective of their needs, respectful and honest.

Because we all live by a different set of internal rules it is important to never make assumptions about people and the way they organise their lives. Understanding these differences helps us to make an informed assessment that reflects the child’s experience, cultural expectations and how the child perceives that.

Social Workers do not need to be experts on every aspect of diversity, you do however need to be respectful and willing to learn. SCR highlight in child deaths and serious injuries how cultural norms were often not talked about or challenged –

* An assumption was made about the interaction observed between Victoria Climbie and her aunt, the assumption was that the quiet reserved nature was as a result of cultural respect for Elders. Sadly this assumption meant that the right type of questions were not asked, Victoria was not seen on her own and more importantly the abuse continued
* An assumption could be that all African families will subject their daughters to FGM. Knowing that FGM is practiced in African communities provides knowledge around potential risk, ascertaining the likelihood of harm from this risk is part of the analysis and assessment. This will in part be informed by what the parent thinks, believes and practice as a family culture/ custom.

In some families their religion and culture may make accessing support difficult, there may be high degrees of guilt and shame – sensitivity to this is required, along with a clear focus on the life experiences for the child. There is a need to be genuine and to work with the family in terms of what they think needs to be different and how do they perceive that as happening

MUSTS

Record how the family identifies themselves in terms of ethnicity, gender and religion

Seek guidance if this is a new area of work for you

Check you have understood correctly

The assessment must include how the families culture influences their decision making and action

You must follow up on all safeguarding matters and not avoid due to fear of disrespect

What is one day in the life like of the child in light of their age, gender, ability

TOP TIPS

Never Assume

If unsure or in doubt ask, using the premise you want to understand how it works in their family as every family is unique

Practice professional curiosity

Find a means of asking ‘in your family how does…… happen’ ,‘What would…… say if we were to ask them?’ Illicit an understanding of the difference, what it means to them and more importantly what it means to their child

Remember Culture is not just part of a religion it is what influences the family, what their standards of norm and acceptance are

Explore family expectations and rules – are girls treated differently to boys?

Consider what is known about the extended family ie is it a family norm that violence takes place ? - this information informs future safety planning as well as capacity for change.

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