

Task 1

Developmental review – Part a

Guidance:

This task should be completed by taking into account the work that you will have undertaken since qualifying, and discussions with your mentor and supervisor/line manager as part of your First Three Years of Practice Individual Plan.

Task one (part a and b) should incorporate the use of a model of reflection.

You must meet the Learning Outcomes for this task (see appendix 5 of the handbook).

Please answer the question below.

Question:

Using a reflective model critically reflect on your professional development since qualifying as a Social Worker. Make reference to the supervision, training, learning and research that has impacted on your work. Based on this and continuing to use a reflective model outline what you have identified and agreed with your manager and/or mentor for your development over the coming 12 months. You must demonstrate how you intend to meet all of the following learning outcomes:-

- applying analysis in assessment to inform interventions;
- working collaboratively with people in need of care and support, their carers and other professionals;
- intervention and application of professional judgement in increasingly complex situations.

750 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section).

Reflection is a way of learning from experiences, and there are many models that can be used within social work to facilitate reflective practice (Bassot, 2016). Reflection can be useful in not only looking at positive but also negative experiences, as argued by Ghaye (2011). In my role as a social work professional there is a lot to consider around how you carry out your professional duties (Bassot, 2016) and adhere to the Social Care Wales Codes of Practice (Social Care Wales, 2017). For the purpose of these tasks, I will use the Gibbs reflective cycle (Bassot, 2016), this model will allow me to say what happened, identify feelings, apply analysis, make conclusions, and action plan for future practice.

I have been able to identify my learning needs through not only formal supervision but also informal discussions with my line manager and colleagues in the team on a regular basis. Supervision takes place every two weeks and allows me to focus on areas which I do not feel confident in or want to learn more about.

I started my social work career in the Coronavirus pandemic which was extremely challenging and has left me feeling isolated. I had access to a mobile phone and laptop was therefore able to work at home all of the time, as per the Local Authority's policy. I have had many challenging conversations over the telephone with families at home, which was very difficult for not only me, but also my family, who could see that I was affected by these conversations. Howe (2008) states that there is a need to understand

our own emotions and those of others, and that an emotionally intelligent social worker is more effective. I felt stressed that the conversation from the parent was becoming aggressive in tone and nature, and I began to also feel frustrated and anxious about how to resolve the situation. Koprowska (2008) highlights that all social situations involve communication and that we experience both physical and emotional symptoms when communicating with others. I analysed this and realised that it was more about my reactions than their behaviour, and that in future I will need to take steps before, during and after a challenging conversation and ask for support. I feel this is something that by improving my own resilience I will be able to work collaboratively with challenging families better, and will use ongoing experience and more complex cases to meet this need.

My mentor and I discussed that one of my learning outcomes is to take a case to a Legal Gateway Meeting (LGM). An LGM forms an integral part of the Public Law Outline process (Ministry of Justice, 2014) and is whereby a case synopsis is shared with the Legal team and managers and a decision is made whether to proceed further, and undertake the pre-proceedings work and thus follow the PLO process. This area of work is quite process driven and has clear steps to follow, and I feel it will be lot to learn, in terms of how the information I gather can be presented it in a way that is clear and factual. I want to be able to communicate to a family how the process works and make sure that at all stages they understand. Kaprowska (2008) discusses the use of a collaborative approach to working with people and how this can benefit communication. It was agreed that I will attend court work training and that a case will be allocated to me that is likely to lead to an LGM so that I can gain this experience. I will also research LGM by accessing council resources and researching information online, as well as looking at previous LGM cases the team have managed.

Under Section 47, of the Children Act 1989 (CA, 1989), the Local Authority has a duty to investigate if it thinks a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm. I feel it would be beneficial for me to attend the training, so I can also carry out the S.47 investigations. By doing this I will also be meeting the National Occupational Standards (NOS, 2011), where I will be considering a risk management plan as part of the investigation. I feel very nervous and anxious about this complex area of work, although I want to be able to gain these skills to be able to manage risk and safeguard children. This training will allow for me to learn more about child protection and safeguarding. It is well documented that protecting children is a complex role that needs a high level of skill (Davies and Duckett, 2008). I will shadow other workers on S.47 visits to gain confidence and then be allocated cases myself in order to meet this learning need. I feel that this will improve my analytical skills and how I assess situations in relation to child safeguarding and deal with more complex situations.

Word count – 821

Task 1 (Part b) Developmental Review

Guidance:

Please ensure you refer to a reflective model and that you met the required learning outcomes for this task (See appendix 5 of the handbook).

Question:

Using a reflective model critically reflect on your development including reference to training, learning, research and use of supervision since completing Task 1 (part a) (when you began the programme).

Consider in discussion with your mentor/supervisor/line manager the extent to which your learning needs have been achieved. Identify any additional learning needs to support your development in the transition to becoming an experienced practitioner in your future career. You must include a reflection on feedback that you have received from individuals in need of care and support and/or their carers and how this feedback has informed your future professional development.

750 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section).

In Task 1 part A, my learning needs were identified as managing challenging conversations with parents or carers, taking a case to LGM and also being able to carry out S.47 investigations. By using the Gibbs' reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988) I will cover each element of what happened, what my feelings were, what was a good/bad experience, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

In relation to handling a challenging conversation with a parent regarding contact with their children, my feelings were that their defensive and argumentative attitude made me feel quite frustrated. During the call, and afterwards I felt upset and worried that I had not said the right things. In terms of positive thoughts about this experience, I can say that the parent did end the call in a polite way and similar conversations have happened since then, and I have asked a parent/carer to call me back when they were less angry, and calmer, or I have given warning and ended the call sooner. I have also learnt that by using the support networks in my team it can help me deal with my emotions and feelings. I spoke to my manager and was able to offload my thoughts and feelings and discuss in supervision and was encouraged to not take comments made by the parent personally. I feel it will be useful to learn more about parental mental health, by attending multi-agency meetings, and hope to understand how a parent struggling with their mental health may feel angry and how their moods can fluctuate greatly. By attending training and gaining more practical experience, as well as having regular supervision.

I took a case to LGM (Legal Gateway Meeting) that involved a parent being arrested after being found to have downloaded indecent images of a child on their mobile phone. The parent lived with their partner and two children at home. After researching other cases

that were taken to LGM by the team and discussing in supervision, I wrote a case synopsis for the LGM which had to be brief, and to the point. I felt very nervous in the meeting especially when going through the case and felt that unsure about what the outcome would be. It was agreed that the case would not proceed further in the PLO process at this time, however I felt that my case synopsis seemed to have the relevant information in it and felt that I better understood the process and what types of questions the Legal team needed to ask. The main area of learning for me, was around managing the risks prior to it getting to LGM. I feel that in order to gain more experience that I need to take another case to LGM and follow it through the PLO process.

I met the learning outcome in relation to the S.47, as I was able to attend the S.47 training and felt it although it was informative, it still left me feeling very anxious about actually having to deal with a case myself. I was able to shadow other colleagues on a couple of S.47 duty calls, and this was positive in terms of seeing how it was managed and how to work jointly with the Police. I have struggled with the need to make quick decisions on the information gathered and despite the Police and managers making the final decisions, I feel the limited time and sometimes information make me feel uneasy. I have been on duty and attended to various types of S.47 joint investigations that have involved child protection medicals and now feel more confident with the process. To gain more knowledge and understanding I need to read up on Child Practice Reviews as well as attend any relevant training.

In respect of the observation on my practice, I was pleased that the feedback given was positive and the family shared they felt listened to and understood why I was visiting them. I feel that I have learnt to not make assumptions, and always go into situations with an open and non-judgemental attitude. I felt I adopted the Social Care Wales Code of Professional Practice by acting in a professional manner and listening to the families' issues. I feel that I also undertook a certain element of "reflection in action", which Schon (1983, cited by Bassot, 2016) describes as the thinking we do whilst we are undertaking actions, in this case the home visit.

To become a more experienced practitioner I believe I need to have the opportunity to work with more complex cases, like those that go to pre-proceedings. I need to set aside more time for reflection, Trevithick (2012) believes that reflective practice enables us to learn from past actions, and review our decision-making methods, which is I believe to be important when dealing with more complex cases.

Word count - 804