

University of South Wales - Multi Agency Child Protection Case Conference - Simulated Workshop

Background

The idea of this workshop originated following consideration of key findings from the Laming review (2003), the Children Act (2004) and the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006a) guidance, all of which identified lessons to learn. Themes emerging from the reports highlighted inadequate information sharing, poor understanding of the roles of different professionals, newly qualified professionals lacking confidence in appropriately identifying and managing child protection cases and the lack of professional leadership. Multi-agency training became available in practice however, it was recognised that opportunities for students to participate in child protection may be limited. Therefore, this complex and often challenging area of practice required greater consideration as to how best prepare students from a variety of professional groups.

Summary of Notable Practice

The University of South Wales is in a fortunate position to be a provider of programmes for students studying social work, police studies, midwifery, health visiting, school nursing and occupational health nursing. The students studying these programmes participate in a simulated safeguarding scenario involving a child sustaining a non-accidental injury. The scenario covers all aspects of the process from the initial incident and referral to agencies through to a full child protection case conference. The University of South Wales has a state of the art Clinical Simulation Centre, which includes a fully equipped simulated community flat, where a home visit can take place the family assessed.

The aim of the Multi Agency Child Protection Case Conference - Simulated Workshop is to afford students the opportunity to attend a strategy meeting and develop their understanding of the child protection process and the Section 47 investigation. It also allows the students to share relevant and pertinent information, interview family members and attend or observe an initial child protection case conference chaired by a professional chair from the local authority. The students have an opportunity to learn with other professionals and gain an understanding of their own and others roles within the safeguarding arena. Time for questions and discussion is provided throughout, and the opportunity to explore perceptions and attitudes, while keeping a focus on the children central to the case, is enabled by academic staff and the Chair. Decision making and professional leadership are also notable areas that are explored within this simulation.

Evaluation

The students evaluate the workshop using a structured questionnaire and all staff involved have a de-brief and reflective discussion on how the workshop progressed. The evaluations to date have been very positive in terms of providing multi-professional student groups the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills around safeguarding and to develop a greater understanding of each other's roles. The student feedback has enabled academic staff to continually develop the workshops authenticity in the context of the safeguarding arena.

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