**Improving Audit Workshop 1 – s47 Investigations/child’s wishes and feelings**

**For consultation**

An initial group of SESLIP authority representatives met on Friday 21st July to work on developing practice standards for s47 investigations.

**Practice standards are agreed statements that describe the practice that is to be measured by an audit.**

Practice standards should be widely known across an authority and used in supervision and other training events to enable social workers to achieve the best outcomes for children and families. Practice standards enable audit teams to be more reliable in their judgments about what they are measuring.

The workshop members expressed a desire to work on developing practice to help promote the best outcomes for children given that, historically, audits have tended to measure processes.

In respect of s47 ***outcomes,*** the following were considered desirable:

* **Assured child is safe from harm and the action to bring this about was the right decision *at the time* (child centred outcome)**
* **Multi agency working has happened and has helped (Process outcome)**
* **Decision-making was proportionate, timely, evidence-based and therefore defensible (Process outcome)**
	+ What has to change to protect the child from harm?
	+ Why it has to change
	+ Was the level of decision making at the lowest possible level?
	+ How many contacts were involved?
	+ How many decision points were there? Were they all required?
	+ Could this outcome be achieved quicker?

A secondary but important follow up, especially in respect of the first of these outcomes, was

* **Has the child subsequently been returned to the system via s47?**

We also thought about auditing ***efficiencies*** in terms of the outcome vs outputs (the least amount of social work time, fewer reports, money spent, etc.)

The workshop explored the ingredients necessary for an outcome which assured the safety of a child from harm. The most important of these ingredients was thought to be the social worker’s engagement with the child to elicit their wishes and feelings. A **draft practice standard** was developed for this, namely:

**In the context of the child’s developmental stage, the social worker will incrementally build a rapport with the child, frequently elicit the child’s relevant views and feelings, remain curious about the views heard or seen, check out how these explain the child’s context and explicitly use this to understand the child’s situation.**

This statement might be written in a child friendly fashion, as:

An adult will spend time with you, listen to what you say without judging you; ask questions to help them understand why others are worried about you; and try to help make things better for you and your family. They will speak with other people too, but they will take your views seriously as these are important to guide how best to help you.

The evidence of this standard being achieved should be found in case notes which will describe

the rapport building,

impact on plans/analysis,

evidence of changing views and

questions raised or hypothesis generated.

We would also expect to see evidence of

the child’s own words (if verbal) or behaviour,

descriptions of how they are living and their circumstances.

In addition there should be

some attempt to analyse the meaning of that was seen and heard, and

evidence that the analysis has informed plans or decisions

The practice standard should be displayed on team walls, in relevant places of the electronic record system and used in supervision, training and induction programmes.

**You are asked to consider the practice standard above on obtaining the child’s wishes and feelings. Does this practice standard capture the relevant information?**

Please consult with colleagues to explore reactions to the standard. The next workshop day, 5th October, will explore the development of an audit tool to measure this standard.

For further details about the Improving Audit Quality project, please visit <http://seslip.co.uk/live-projects/improving-audit-quality> or contact David Goosey on 07721 435184 or at Davidgoosey@thechange-agency.com