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OpenLearn course	Introducing social work: a starter kit
OpenLearn url:	https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/introducing-social-work-starter-kit/content-section-overview

Victoria's initial thoughts before the simulated meeting with the family, based on referral information

Q. You haven't yet met this family. Based on the information you have so far, what is the referral about, and what is the social work role in this instance?

A. Initial thoughts are Ellie has been missing – there's a significant question as to where she's been, what's been happening and why her parents haven't been concerned about this. Other issues appear to be risk of CSE (child sexual exploitation), substance misuse and boundaries (linking to physical/verbal aggression). The social work role is to explore whether Ellie has experienced harm whilst missing and what future harm might be.

Q. If your work tends to be influenced by a particular practice model or theoretical approach, which aspects of this are you thinking about at this point?

A. I'm thinking particularly about systemic family therapy, and the importance of seeing issues in context of relationships rather than located in a person, for example Ellie's behaviour likely to be linked to her environment and parental relationships. Also considering hypotheses such as family scripts about teenagers and responsibility/education etc.

Q. What have you done to prepare for meeting with the family?

A. Summarising key points and thinking about how to share an agenda. In a real life situation it's likely that there would be a limited time to prepare.

Q. From your professional experience and what you know about the family so far, do you anticipate any potential difficulties or strengths that might affect communication?

A. Strengths are that parents know about the referral and have engaged in some discussions of change so far. Challenges are that Ellie doesn't know a social worker is visiting and may feel blamed/shamed. It also seems that parents have shown limited insight into concerns up until this point and limited capacity to change, suggesting that they are likely to disagree with some of the worries.

Q. What are you hoping to achieve by the end of this interview?

A. This is a first meeting so it's important to set the context for a working relationship. It would be important to establish whether Ellie has experienced any harm whilst missing and steps may need to be taken to address this and support her if so. It will also be important to think about an ongoing assessment and future interventions: these may range from a substance misuse support to a targeted programme addressing CSE concerns, as well as work with parents around boundaries. The impact of this on the younger brother will also need to be considered as part of the ongoing assessment*. Agreement for future meetings will be a good place to start.

* In filming, Victoria did talk with the family about the need to involve Ellie's younger brother in future work. In order to keep the film at a reasonable length, however, this conversation was edited out.

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