

### **Assessment**

This includes questions such as:

- What is the problem?
- What needs to be learned?
- What are the strengths and limitations in this situation?

### **Planning**

- What should be done about the situation and by whom?

### **Implementation**

- Let's get into action!

### **Evaluation**

- How are things at the finish of our efforts?



### **ACTIVITY 27: QUESTION**

Now consider the following scenario.

You are on duty at the social work office and receive a telephone call. It is a woman who refuses to give her name. She tells you that a family living in her block of flats are badly treating their children.

What do you do?

Reflect on this situation and make brief notes before continuing.

**A**

### ACTIVITY 27: ANSWER

You would probably initially try to reassure the caller that her wish to remain anonymous would be respected. You would make it clear that you recognise her concerns, but that you need further information in order to understand what is happening to these children. You would explain that as a social worker you also have a duty to families and that you cannot simply remove the children because she wants the pressure of the situation on her to be immediately relieved.

You would then discuss this case with your senior/team manager to decide on the next appropriate course of action. Your discussion would cover the following areas.

- Do you know this family?
- Can we find out who this family is if no address is given?
- Is there an existing social worker?
- Is there a likelihood of significant harm (not assessed at this stage)?

Throughout the process you would be working within your own knowledge and practice base, with the experience and skills you have developed in this work. You will also be reflecting on this.

**Q**

### ACTIVITY 28: QUESTION

Suppose you now visit the same family and find some cause for concern. On leaving the flat you bump into a woman who says that the children are left on their own overnight and she can frequently hear them screaming. You report this to the team manager, and after discussion you visit again and are refused entry.

What would you do?

Write a list of your alternatives.

**A**

### ACTIVITY 28: ANSWER

This is obviously a difficult, although not uncommon, scenario. A number of inquiries have censured social workers for their apparent inaction in cases where children have died. Although very few deaths occur, the ones that do are well documented and widely discussed in the media. This can produce a defensive attitude among social workers within child protection practice.

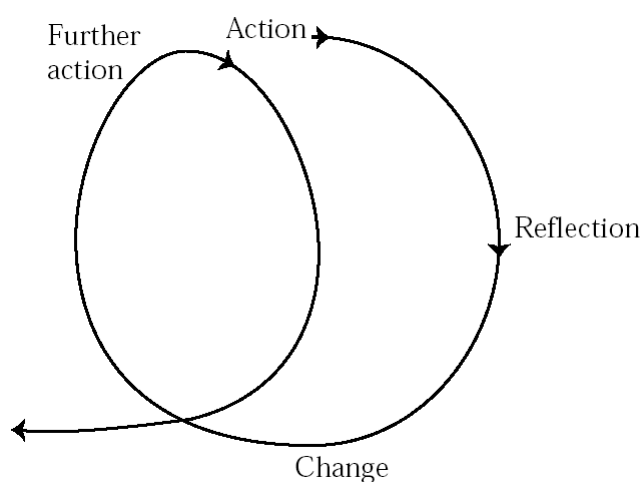
You would have a duty to investigate under the Children Act 1989 and you would need to refer to *Working Together* and the Joint Investigation Procedures (covered in Unit 3). You would also need to be involved in a continuous process of:

- assessing and reassessing the situation
- identifying your possible courses of action
- reflecting on what you are doing.

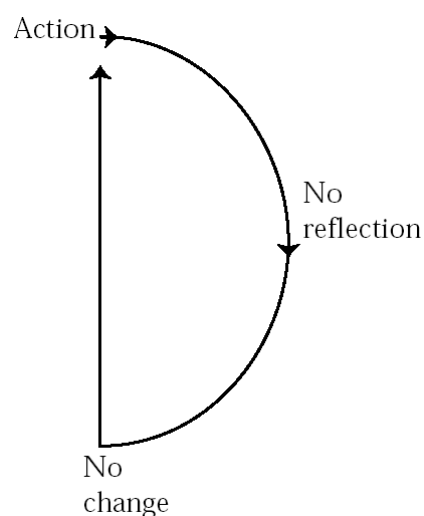
This could be represented diagrammatically (see Figure 5 below).

As you can see, the process involves change in the light of reflection and further action which moves on.

We are learning from and reviewing the process and outcome and moving forward to enable change to occur.



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

Now, consider the situation where you did not reflect. Figure 6 suggests that in this case, you would simple continue to act as before.

In this process no reflection (thinking back over and analysis) takes places and therefore no change takes place in terms of the social worker's role and action.

You cannot be expected to develop a reflective approach by reading about it in isolation from practice. Inevitably, the process is developmental, in the sense that it takes time. It also involves you in discussing your practices and their impact on your thoughts and feelings, with colleagues and with a supervisor/tutor/practice teacher. Reflectiveness is an approach which affects, and is affected by both your personal and your professional development.

Two books by Schon, have become essential sources for professionals wanting to develop their understanding of reflective practice:

Schon, D, 1987, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey Bass, San Fransisco.

## **Q** REVIEW ACTIVITY: QUESTION

Describe a piece of work you have been involved in recently. Then spend up to 30 minutes making notes in response to the following questions.

- What reflections can you now make about the process and outcome
- What did you do?
- Why did you do it?
- What was the outcome?
- Was this a desirable outcome?
- What alternative outcomes could there have been?
- What could you do in future pieces of work? (Respond to the last question by developing an action plan for yourself using Honey and Mumford's model.)

## **A** REVIEW ACTIVITY: ANSWER

The above review activity will enable you to reflect on a piece of work you were involved in to enable you to take that learning from practice forward and to implement reflection on your practice for your future development.

### **Summary**

In this session you have been able to reflect on your own actions and their implications for yourself and others. This is a critical skill in effective social work practice. It is vital to continually reassess your practice if you are to move forward rather than stagnate.

In the next session you will have the chance to draw together your learning from these four sessions in order to start to develop reflective anti-oppressive practice. In doing this you need to be thinking about yourself and your work before, during and after a particular piece of social work.

## **SESSION FIVE – Empowerment Through Anti-Oppressive**

### **Session Objectives**

By the end of this session you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of the term empowerment
- identify what you can do to empower people through anti-oppressive practice.

## Introduction

In this session you will look at the issues of empowerment and what this term means for your practice. At this stage, we introduce the concepts associated with empowerment. In subsequent units and modules, you will have opportunities to examine how they are worked through in practice. In this module, Unit 4, Session Five deals with empowering practice in more detail.

**Note:** You will need to identify a colleague with whom you can discuss the content of this session in particular. It is essential to discuss issues associated with empowerment and anti-oppressive practice, and particularly the feelings you have about this area of work, with a person who has experience of this area of professional and practice development.

## Exploring problematic concepts

There is no easy, straightforward road from understanding the concepts associated with empowerment, to using them. This is for two reasons.

- The concepts themselves are inherently problematic, which means that there is no agreement among commentators about how to define them.
- Social work employers, practitioners, service users and carers are unlikely all to agree about how empowerment should be practised.

For these reasons, it is very proper for social workers to be:

- committed to developing an empowering practice
- cautious about how they do this.

You should continue by listening to the audio cassette which is attached to this session. This should alert you to some of the difficulties associated with the concepts underlying it – empowerment, oppression and anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice.

The article by Mullender and Ward – Item 4 in the Resource File – provides useful material for this part of the session.

## Oppression: pervasive but often invisible

Let's continue by looking at the ways in which oppression pervades society. Some commentators argue that British society is so saturated with oppression that people living in it have difficulty in recognising this fact. Here is one example of this view, in the following quotation from Mitchell.