

Responsibilities of a social worker

[Business](#), [Work](#)



Within this assignment the writer will outline the main roles and responsibilities of a social worker within this family. Legal and policy principles will be discussed, practical and appropriate theories and research studies will be included and finally, the discussion of oppression and how it may be affecting this family will also be included.

The writer will begin by giving a definition of social work, quoted from the British Association Of Social Workers (BASW).

The Association has adopted the following definition of social work issued by the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work. It applies to social work practitioners and educators in every region and country in the world.

" The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (2001)".

Stephanie is a single mother of two young children. At this present time in her life she is finding things difficult. Stephanie left school at the age of sixteen and shortly after leaving school she became pregnant with her first child, Naomi, who is now six years old. When Naomi was two years old, Stephanie left home and moved into a council flat of her own close by to her mother and two elder sisters.

Stephanie's relationship with these members of her family is not particularly good. Stephanie's mother and sisters believe that Stephanie's partner Paul is a burden on her. Paul, who works unsociable hours as a taxi driver, claims to be living at home with his parents. However, this is not the case, as he spends most of his time at Stephanie's flat. Paul may spend time at Stephanie's flat but he does not spend any quality time with Stephanie or their children.

Stephanie has become depressed over the last six months. She resents having to look after the children on her own and she also feels isolated. Stephanie has asked the Area Office for help as her income support book has been taken off her because the D. S. S. believes that she is cohabiting.

Stephanie's second child, Christopher, is 18 months old and he has regular visits from a health visitor. The health visitor is worried about Christopher's development and weight gain. As regards Naomi, her school teacher has noticed a deterioration in her behaviour and is worried about Naomi appearing upset, tired and subdued. Naomi has come to school feeling hungry and dressed inappropriately.

The social worker's role in planning an assessment is to plan for the assessment and, in order to account for the complexity of the task should gather and record information in a systematic and precise way, checking information with the children and parents. Where there are differences over information these should be recorded and strengths and difficulties should be acknowledged. The assessment should be child-centred and therefore the impact of the situation on the child must be clearly identified. (Parker, J. & Bradley, G. 2005 Page 20) The roles and responsibilities of social work are

mostly decided by a legal policy framework. These policies may change to accommodate new issues in society. Principles should be acknowledged on what actions to take (See Appendix 1).

If Naomi and Christopher will benefit from enrolment in a day care centre and certain needs will be met by this action, then the paramountcy principle will steer the social worker towards encouraging Stephanie to enrol them. To ignore the children's needs would be legally and ethically negligent (Dickson, D, page 10).

The assessment will involve the social worker having an open mind and communicating with Stephanie on a level in which she understands, not using jargon that may confuse her. Any information gathered from Stephanie should be relevant to the case. All information gathered will always be monitored and recorded, everything that is being done will be explained to Stephanie as clients have the right to know what is happening at all times throughout the process (see Appendix 2).

In any assessment as a social worker your own personal beliefs, values and biases must always be acknowledged, and also the impact your approach will have on the way the assessment is carried out (Parker, J. & Bradley, G. 2005 Page 7).

Stephanie will be encouraged to make decisions and the social worker will promote her independence and assist her in understanding and exercising her rights as this will affect her and her families' future. Stephanie's personal

views, values and beliefs should always be respected as she is an individual and has to be treated as one at all times.

It is important to be open, honest and explicit with Stephanie throughout the procedure. If Stephanie knows that she can rely and depend on you, this will help in building confidence in your relationship with her. Stephanie should always be told if you are not going to be available and tell her why for example if you have other commitments for that particular time.

As a Social worker, you must attempt to create and maintain the trust and confidence of Stephanie. It will be made clear to Stephanie that any information relating to the children that will cause harm or danger to them will be reported to an appropriate authority. Any complaints from Stephanie will be taken seriously and passed on to an appropriate person. The social worker will follow a risk assessment policy and procedure to assess whether Stephanie presents a risk to her children (Dickson D. pages 91-94).

In making an assessment on behalf of Stephanie, the 'assessment triangle' (see Appendix 3) and the 'helping cycle' will both be used (see Appendix 4). In working with Stephanie on this case the social worker must take full responsibility for any actions carried out on behalf of Stephanie whether they are right or wrong (see appendix 5).

It is important as a trainee social worker to know the importance of planning and tuning in for an assessment. Each case dealt with will be different to other cases. A key element of tuning in is "preparatory empathy". This will involve putting yourself into Stephanie's shoes, feeling what she is feeling,

looking at the situation from her point of view. For example, Stephanie may be feeling depressed and helpless as a result of isolation. Financial worries may cause her to feel resentful towards Paul as he is no help to her and the children. Does she feel unable to cope as a single parent and feel that she is a bad mother (Dickson D. p17)?

As the social worker has a certain power they may be able to intervene. The D. S. S. can be contacted and Stephanie can apply for an emergency payment from them until the situation is resolved. If Stephanie's money is cut this could lead to more situations arising such as rent and electricity bills not getting paid as Stephanie will not be able to afford these. This will then cause further problems for Stephanie and the children. Stephanie may become more depressed and her parenting may be affected, and the children's needs could suffer.

In planning an initial assessment it will be necessary to visit Stephanie and the children. Then it will be necessary to have a discussion with Stephanie and Paul and observe their living situation focusing on the three aspects of the assessment triangle; child's developmental needs, parenting capacity, family and environmental factors. Then it is necessary to explain the Department's policy of supporting children and families to stay together (Parker. J, and Bradley. G, 2005 page 21).

In the assessment of Naomi and Christopher, both of the children's development of progress will be examined, in relation to each child's age and stage of development. There must be an understanding of what the children need to achieve successfully at each stage of their development, in

order to ensure that they will both have the opportunity to achieve their full potential(DOH Frame Work Assessment 1999 page 18).

Providing a range of services from a multi-disciplinary team requires a high degree of co-operation and co-ordination from the professionals involved. It is to be noted that central to the whole process should be the needs and wishes of the service user. The team will include not only the professionals but also Stephanie and her family. Therefore, Stephanie's involvement and participation in her social and health care provision is taken to be fundamental.

The legal definition of need is set out in article 17 of the Children's (NI) Order (1995). The Children's Order states that a child is in need if, he or she is unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have an opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services ([www. opsi. gov. uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)).

The Children's (NI) Order article 17 (1995) is based on a clean and consistent set of principles designed with the common aim of promoting the welfare of children, the rights of parents exercising their responsibilities towards their children and the duty of the state to intervene to promote and protect the welfare of children in need or at risk. The principles of the Children Order NI 1995 can be seen at [www. opsi. gov. uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk). As a student social worker it is necessary to adhere to the legislation put in place.

Assessment is an ongoing process, in which the client participates, the purpose of which is to understand people in relation to their environment; it is

the basis for planning what needs to be done to maintain, improve or bring about change in the person, the environment or both (Coulshed V, p. 21).

The Assessment framework will be used to assess Stephanie's case. Good assessment is crucial for the well-being of the children and the family. It has to be noted that the welfare of the children is paramount at all times.

The assessment triangle will be looked at for both of the children. The first dimension of the triangle is The Child's Developmental Needs. There are seven areas in this dimension. The first area to be examined is health. Both Naomi and Christopher's health is an issue as this relates to their development as well as their physical and mental well-being. Genetic factors can be taken into consideration on health issues. As Stephanie is suffering with depression, she may not realise that the children are not receiving an adequate diet and as a result of this their health can suffer.

Then there is education. This covers the children's cognitive development, which begins at birth. It includes playing and interacting with other children, access to books, to acquire a range of skills and interests, to experience success and achievement. An adult should be involved in the education of Naomi and Christopher. Stephanie should encourage her children to learn in different ways.

Emotional needs and development are the concerns by appropriate responses demonstrated in the children's feelings and actions. As Naomi's teacher has noticed a change in behaviour, this will be looked at.

Christopher's development will also be looked at because the health visitor has noticed that he is not developing as well as he should be.

The identity of the children may be affected if Stephanie's depression continues. The identity is related to how the children view themselves and their feelings of acceptance by the family and society will have an impact on this.

Family and Social Relationships includes having a good relationship with parents and siblings. The children are at a young age but this may be taken into consideration as it may have an effect on them in developing relationships in later life.

Their Social Presentation will be looked at, as Naomi's behaviour has deteriorated and she is also dressed inappropriately.

The final area to be examined is Self Care Skills. If Naomi sees that there is something wrong with her mother, she might begin to take over some parental roles. She may be very young but she would be capable of doing things such as dressing herself and her little brother (Frame Work Assessment page 19).

The next dimension of the triangle is the Parenting Capacity. Is Stephanie providing Basic Care, which includes providing for the children's physical and appropriate medical needs? Are the children receiving food, warmth, shelter, clean and appropriate clothing and adequate personal hygiene? (See Appendix 6)

Is Stephanie Ensuring Safety for the children? This can mean in the home and elsewhere, for instance, crossing roads.

Are the children receiving Emotional Warmth? Stephanie may not be capable of this because she is suffering with depression. She may not realise it, but at times she may not respond to the children's needs. Physical contact such as giving the children a hug can demonstrate emotional warmth.

Are the children receiving Stimulation from their parents? If Paul is not spending any time with the children and Stephanie is feeling low, this will have an effect on their stimulation. The children should be in a routine and be encouraged with different tasks such as schoolwork; this will facilitate them both to meet challenges, which they will face in life.

Guidance and Boundaries enable children to regulate their own emotions and behaviour. Are Stephanie and Paul preparing their children for the development of later life when they will need to know what's right and what's wrong? Self-values' and conscience are learnt through this process. If the children have no emotional support there is a danger that normal rules and boundaries within the family could break down. There is a risk of children's schoolwork and behaviour suffering as a result of the situation not being resolved quickly (Frame Work Assessment page 21).

The final stage of the assessment triangle that has to be looked at is the Family and Environmental Factors.

The writer will begin by examining Family History and Functioning. The children's inheritance includes both genetic and psycho-social factors. Family

functioning is influenced by who is living in the house. At this stage we have to look at the fact of Paul being there. Is it doing more harm than good?

Wider family members such as Stephanie's mother and sisters may be helpful in getting Stephanie back on track. It could be beneficial for all of them to come together and have a discussion about the current situation.

Is the Housing adequate for the family? If Stephanie's money has been cut, will she be able to keep the home warm for the children? Is the house clean?

Employment is another issue. Is Paul's pattern of work suitable? Would it be possible for Stephanie to get employment? Both these questions have an impact on the children.

Income, is there enough income to provide basic needs for the children? Stephanie's benefits have been cut, this will have a major impact on the family? Will Paul help out? What are the financial difficulties that will affect the children?

Families Social Integration. Stephanie feels isolated. This is not good for any of the family as she is the main carer. Stephanie should be encouraged to take up a hobby or night class. This will develop her confidence and it will have an impact on the children.

The social worker should give Stephanie information on Community Resources i. e what is available for the family in the community such as play groups, mother and toddler groups, summer schemes, education learning

centres, family centres. Local groups such as STEER and Gingerbread may be able to help and advise the family.

From this assessment it is clear that Stephanie is at secondary level 2 of the Table For Guidance On Thresholds For Intervention For Services For Children In Need (See Appendix 7). We have to work with Stephanie now and prevent her from reaching level 3 (Frame Work Assessment page 24). We can work with a multidisciplinary team to resolve any issues that have developed.

To oppress a person is to treat them in a very harsh and unfair way and cause them to feel anxious or distressed, (a definition from the Oxford Dictionary). As a result of this family living in poverty they will be oppressed. This will have a high impact on all of the family and also cause different problems. The family may be stigmatised. Teachers in Naomi's school may have labeled Stephanie as being an unfit parent without knowing any of the facts about her situation.

Where is the poverty coming from and what is the reason that this family is living in poverty? There are many reasons for poverty to occur within families. Because Stephanie is female she may be discriminated against when trying to gain employment. She may have little or no education. The question has to be asked if she was employed would she be provided with childcare? All aspects have to be looked at and must be taken into consideration when Stephanie is looking at herself as a person and parent (Thompson, N. 2001).

As Stephanie is not working, Paul is the main earner for the family but he is not providing for them in such a way that they can live without money worries. Paul is also claiming to be living at his parents house, so he is not taking any responsibility for the income of the family. Stephanie is the one that does everything in the household and paying the bills is a major role.

Stephanie's strengths and weaknesses could be looked at and developed. Stephanie may have the capability of returning to education and getting some qualifications, which would enable her to gain employment. With the help of her mother and sisters she could develop her confidence and this will also play a major part on reducing her depression. Stephanie may be taking medication for her depression but the social worker can look at other methods of treatment such as cognitive therapy.

Stephanie has to look at her relationship with Paul and ask herself if she is doing the right thing for her children by letting him stay in their home. Stephanies' mother would like to see Paul out of her daughters life which is not possible as he has a right to see his children, but she can encourage Stephanie and support her if this is what it takes.