

Top tips for mental health assessments



Kevin Stone and Sarah Vicary share tips for AMHPs, ASWs and MHOs

Decisions made by Approved Mental Health Professionals, Mental Health Officers and Approved Social Workers and varied. To assist in your practice, consider using the acronym SPIRAL.

S Decisions you make need to be **SOUND** rather than good or bad, as outcomes cannot be reliably predicted. A sound decision is demonstrated by adhering to a rational and reasoned process.

P Your decisions must demonstrate a **PROPORTIONATE** application of the law in the management and mitigation of the presenting needs and risks associated with the person being assessed. You can show this by indicating how you have weighed up your actions.

I Your **INDEPENDENCE** should be demonstrated through the discussions that you hold, and how you account for your decision-making in your recording.

R Is what you have recorded **RELIABLE**? Could the contributory information you are founding your decisions on be verified if the need arises? This

'Your independence should be shown in how you account for decision-making'

includes information such as the dates and times of any telephone calls and other information you have used to make your decision. Can you show how the information you have gained from key stakeholders, such as the assessed person and their relatives, carers and professionals has influenced your decision? If so you are thereby demonstrating that you have acted in good faith and with reasonable care.

A Is your decision justifiable in **ALL** the circumstances of the case? It is important that a social perspective of mental health has informed your assessment and, where necessary, enabled you to challenge an overly medical perspective.

L Have you applied what you have **LEARNT** through reflective supervision? Is your practice and decision-making within the scope and acceptability of your peer AMHPs, ASWs or MHOs?

Dr Stone is from the University of the West of England and Dr Vicary is from the Open University. The above is an excerpt from their forthcoming *Approved Mental Health Professional Practice Handbook*

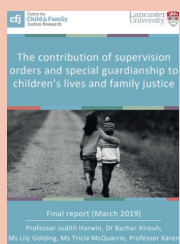
THE KNOWLEDGE

Key research and reports from the social care sector over the past month

The contribution of supervision orders and special guardianship to children's lives and family justice

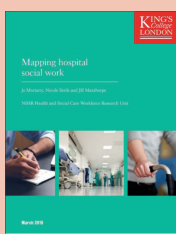
This report by the Centre for Child and Family Justice research marks the first national (England) study of supervision orders to help support birth families stay together. It also reviews the impact of special guardianship orders.

Key message: Councils make very few applications for supervision orders. A critical difference between supervision order children and those subject to special guardianship orders is in the higher return to court rate.



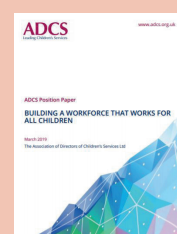
Mapping Hospital Social Work (NIHR Health and Social Care

Workforce Research Unit)



Lyn Romeo, England's chief social worker for adults, commissioned this review into hospital work with older adults. **Key message:** There is a strong international consensus that the distinctiveness of hospital social work with older people lies in its holistic approach towards individuals and their families. But in the UK there is little evidence about the way the role is used. The review recommends an audit of the nation's hospital social workers and further research to help build a clearer picture.

Building a workforce that works for all children (ADCS)



This report by the Association of Directors of Children's Services looks at the children's services workforce. **Key message:** Westminster government funding in social work reform and training is welcome but has "largely been at the expense of the wider workforce, which has borne the brunt of a decade of austerity." The sector lacks a clear voice to advocate for the whole children's workforce at the national level. The DfE's £23m investment in an accreditation system for social workers would be better spent on retention.