Case study 'Isabella', evidence 3: Preparation for 3 month review

**Domain 1. Professionalism** Social workers are members of an internationally recognised profession, a title protected in UK law. Social workers demonstrate professional commitment by taking responsibility for their conduct, practice and learning, with support through supervision. As representatives of the social work profession they safeguard its reputation and are accountable to the professional regulator.

In the two observations carried out so far it is clear that Isabella is working within requirements of the regulator. Isabella has also demonstrated excellent time management skills – she meets all timescales in her work and manages her workload effectively. Isabella has also considered the way that she can maintain her wellbeing – and she manages stress well showing a growing professional resilience.

However, reviewing Isabella’s recording and based on the observations of practice I have some concerns that Isabella’s practice is quite procedural. As a result Isabella still needs to develop her capability in relation to the following specific capability statements:

- **Make proactive use of supervision to reflect critically on practice, explore different approaches to your work, support your development across the nine capabilities and understand the boundaries of professional accountability**
- **Identify your learning needs; assume responsibility for improving your practice through appropriate professional development**

**Domain 2. Values and Ethics: Apply social work ethical principles and values to guide professional practice.**

Social workers have an obligation to conduct themselves ethically and to engage in ethical decision-making, including through partnership with people who use their services. Social workers are knowledgeable about the value base of their profession, its ethical standards and relevant law.

Isabella has identified a number of conflicts between her personal and professional values (for example in direct observation). If she were to improve her skills in reflective practice this would certainly enhance her practice in this area, particularly with regard to ethical decision making which calls for skills in critical reflection. This would link in with the specific capability statement:

- **Recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas to arrive at principled decisions**

**Domain 3. Diversity: Recognise diversity and apply anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive principles in practice**

Social workers understand that diversity characterises and shapes human experience and is critical to the formation of identity. Diversity is multidimensional and includes race, disability, class, economic status, age, sexuality, gender and transgender, faith and belief. Social workers appreciate that, as a consequence of difference, a person’s life experience may include oppression, marginalisation and alienation as well as privilege, power and acclaim, and are able to challenge appropriately.

Isabella has demonstrated a commitment to anti-oppressive practice and she has recently challenged a consultant about his assertion that a service user should be placed in 24 hour care. Isabella and I have had some interesting discussions about the diversity between Isabella and her team colleagues and many service users. It would again enhance Isabella’s capability in this area if she were more open to critically reflecting on the impact of this diversity.
**Domain 4. Rights, Justice and Economic Wellbeing: Advance human rights and promote social justice and economic well-being**

Social workers recognise the fundamental principles of human rights and equality, and that these are protected in national and international law, conventions and policies. They ensure these principles underpin their practice. Social workers understand the importance of using and contributing to case law and applying these rights in their own practice. They understand the effects of oppression, discrimination and poverty.

Isabella works to promote service user’s rights – as the example of her recently challenging the consultant demonstrates. However, the fact that she is not sufficiently reflective has impacted on her ability to identify the factors that can impact on service users rights and economic wellbeing – particularly in terms of how services can infringe service user’s rights. Isabella therefore still needs to demonstrate capability in relation to the following specific capability statement:

- Begin to integrate principles of and entitlements to social justice, social inclusion and equality in your analysis and practice, by identifying factors that contribute to inequality and exclusion, and supporting people to pursue options to enhance their wellbeing.

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**Domain 5. Knowledge: Apply knowledge of social sciences, law and social work practice theory**

Social workers understand psychological, social, cultural, spiritual and physical influences on people; human development throughout the life span and the legal framework for practice. They apply this knowledge in their work with individuals, families and communities. They know and use theories and methods of social work practice.

Isabella has demonstrated an effective working knowledge of procedures and legislation. Indeed her knowledge of the assessment procedures in the agency and particularly her knowledge of systems and which forms need to be submitted is noted by others in the team who will seek her advice on these matters. However, she does appear to take an unquestioning approach to this knowledge. Isabella therefore needs to specifically develop her critical awareness to demonstrate the following specific capability statement:

- Consolidate, develop and demonstrate comprehensive understanding and application of the knowledge gained in your initial training, and knowledge related to your specialist area of practice, including critical awareness of current issues and new evidence-based practice research.

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**Domain 6. Critical reflection and Analysis - Apply critical reflection and analysis to inform and provide a rationale for professional decision-making**

Social workers are knowledgeable about and apply the principles of critical thinking and reasoned discernment. They identify, distinguish, evaluate and integrate multiple sources of knowledge and evidence. These include practice evidence, their own practice experience, service user and carer experience together with research-based, organisational, policy and legal knowledge. They use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity.

Isabella needs to develop her skills in critically reflective in order to meet both of the specific capability statements in this domain:

- Show creativity in tackling and solving problems, by considering a range of options to solve dilemmas
- Use reflective practice techniques to evaluate and critically analyse information, gained from a variety of sources, to construct and test hypotheses and make explicit evidence-informed decisions
Domain 7. Intervention and Skills: Use judgement and authority to intervene with individuals, families and communities to promote independence, provide support and prevent harm, neglect and abuse

Social workers engage with individuals, families, groups and communities, working alongside people to assess and intervene. They enable effective relationships and are effective communicators, using appropriate skills. Using their professional judgement, they employ a range of interventions: promoting independence, providing support and protection, taking preventative action and ensuring safety whilst balancing rights and risks. They understand and take account of differentials in power, and are able to use authority appropriately. They evaluate their own practice and the outcomes for those they work with.

Isabella has demonstrated a range of skills, she is particularly good at recording and has a particular skill in recording assessments contemporaneously whilst maintaining eye contact with service users. However, Isabella would benefit from developing a wider repertoire of intervention methods through critically reflecting on what works and how approaches can be amended in light of changing circumstances. As a result, Isabella still needs to demonstrate her capability in relation to the following specific domain:

- Select, use and review appropriate and timely social work interventions, informed by evidence of their effectiveness, that are best suited to the service user(s), family, carer, setting and self.

Domain 8. Contexts and organisations: Engage with, inform, and adapt to changing contexts that shape practice. Operate effectively within own organisational frameworks and contribute to the development of services and organisations.

Operate effectively within multi-agency and inter-professional partnerships and settings

Social workers are informed about and pro-actively responsive to the challenges and opportunities that come with changing social contexts and constructs. They fulfil this responsibility in accordance with their professional values and ethics, both as individual professionals and as members of the organisation in which they work. They collaborate, inform and are informed by their work with others, inter-professionally and with communities.

Isabella has a number of strengths in this area. She is widely viewed as an effective team player and carries out her team duties effectively. As stated, other members of the team seek Isabella’s advice on policy and procedure. Isabella has developed good working relationships with her colleagues and with other professionals. It would be useful to see Isabella reflect on feedback from these colleagues and wider professionals as this could enhance the evidence holistically.

Isabella managed the conflict with the Consultant referred to earlier very confidently and this demonstrated a growing ability to manage conflict autonomously.

Domain 3. Professional Leadership: Take responsibility for the professional learning and development of others through supervision, mentoring, assessing, research, teaching, leadership and management

The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management. An individual’s contribution will gain influence when undertaken as part of a learning, practice-focused organisation. Learning may be facilitated with a wide range of people including social work colleagues, service users and carers, volunteers, foster carers and other professionals.

Isabella was shadowed by a social care apprentice recently. In supervision Isabella said that she enjoyed this task and sharing her knowledge of the assessment process with the apprentice. This shows Isabella beginning to develop skills in relation to this domain. Isabella does contribute to discussions in team meetings, advising on what the departmental requirements are in relation to specific situations. However, Isabella has shared with me that she can be frustrated by discussions within the meetings about the difficulties workers are experiencing – she feels that requirements are clear and that team members should get on with the work. As we are trying to move towards team meetings being more reflective to enhance professional development, some of these discussions can be interesting and it would be good to see Isabella contributing to these discussions more reflectively. Isabella does need to develop her approach to supervision – taking a more critically reflective stance in order to fully demonstrate capability in relation to the specific capability statement:

- Show the capacity for leading practice through the manner in which you conduct your professional role, your contribution to supervision and to team meetings.