**Research and Inquiry – Social Workers**

Much of your practice will have been derived from the study you have undertaking as part of qualifying as a social worker, PQ training and the practice wisdom you have derived as a result of your experiences of undertaking your role as a social work.

The Social Work Task Force recommended national standards for the support social workers should expect from their employers and managers in order to do their jobs effectively (recommendation 6). One of those standards is to provide opportunities for continuing professional development, as well as access to research and practice guidance.

Research often draws upon personal experiences, interviews, actions, stories and activities. Think for a moment about the feedback that the Munro report gives us about what children, who are subject child protection procedures, want from those very social workers who are engaged in safeguarding investigations. Current research therefore represents a potentially rich source of knowledge for practitioners, and identifies issues that we can use as referent points to reflect on our own practice.

What is your relationship with the knowledge base represented by systematic research and inquiry? Take some time to write your responses to the following questions:

* In principle, how important do you think research is in relation to social work? What are the reasons for being interested in research?
* What are your criticisms of social work research? What should or could researchers do in order to make research more relevant of useful?
* In what ways do you use research to inform your practice? List some research reports that you have recently read. How have these influenced how you think about your work as a social worker?
* How do you access research? How often do you read about research findings?
* If you were in a position to have some free time to do research, which questions or topics would interest you?

Once you have completed these questions, reflect on what you have discovered about who you are as a social worker. What directions would you like your career and interest to take you?

Adapted from The J McLeod (2004) *Counsellor’s Workbook: developing a personal approach* Open University Press: Maidenhead p127