**Practice Note for all SCT Managers and Practice Supervisors:**

**Management Oversight and Supervision**

Good Management Oversight and Supervision is an essential component of practice in social work, not just for frontline staff, but at all levels in our organisation. Effective supervision provides a safe space for practitioners to reflect on their practice, develop skills, increase knowledge and personal development including offering emotional support. Supervision will explore the emotional impact of our work, to take a step back and think about their own response to families and how this might influence their judgement about the child’s wellbeing (Ruch et al, 2011).

Management Oversight and Supervisions is also a fundamental element of our practice and a foundation on which excellent practice is built for the development of a stable, resilient and engaged workforce. Practitioners at all levels of the system should have the opportunity to engage in good quality, reflective and supervision which promotes critical thinking, analysis, appreciative enquiry, helps us to think about evidence-based practice and research, continuous learning and development opportunities and promotes our emotional wellbeing. Reflective supervision offers a safe space for a practitioner to slow down and think, explore possibilities, look for meaning and a way to do their work with children and their families well.

When undertaking work with our families, the importance of good quality Management Oversight and Supervision is directly linked to the quality of service and interventions received by our children and families, as well as the experience of the practitioner, their sense of self, what they bring to supervision in relation to their personal and professional values. Management Oversight is required on all assessments, plans, updating plans and reviews and significant events for children and young people. Good quality supervision supports practitioners to facilitate reflection by going through several different stages. In Sandwell, Management Oversight and Supervision can be provided by some more experienced practitioners in specific Teams such as Early Help, as well as Team Managers. Throughout this note, reference will be made to the term Managers, which is inclusive of any practitioner within a supervisory role.

The purpose of this practice note is to outline what is meant by Management Oversight and Supervision and its importance when working with children, young people and their families informed by Sandwell’s Supervision policy. Next, how the Practice Framework and Model strengthens the quality of Management Oversight and Supervision by using the case study of Annabelle and Jamie. Finally, thinking about the quality and effectiveness of supervision using reflective spaces and the direct impact on children and families, whilst considering good practice points and links to further reading.

**What is Management Oversight and Supervision?**

Management oversight provides guidance and direction, quality assurance, analysis and reasoned decision-making on the case record of a child or young person. It should provide practitioners with a sense of security and containment and needs to be underpinned by the values and theories of strengths-based practice. Supervision can be described as ‘a core mechanism for helping social workers critically reflect on the understanding they are forming of the family, of considering their emotional response and whether this is adversely affecting their reasoning, and for making decisions about how best to help' Eileen Munroe (2010).

Management oversight and supervision are processes that ensures our Practice Guidance, Process Maps and Practice Standards are upheld for each individual child, they support have been provided, direction given and any challenge to the practitioner, while demonstrating understanding, insight and oversight of the critical issues for the child.

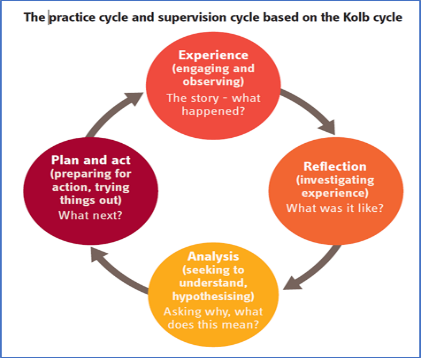
In Sandwell, the importance of robust Management Oversight and Supervision is reflected in our doing wheel (see illustrated). At every stage of the work that we do with our families including assessments, plans, updating plans and reviews (blue circle) good Management Oversight and Supervision is required to secure the best outcomes for children and their families.

In addition to Management Oversight and Supervision, Visits, Direct Work and Intervention, Family, Culture, Identity and Community, and Partners and Partnership Working are important parts of our work with families (green circle).

**Why is Management Oversight and Supervision important?**

* Throughout our work with children, young people and their families, the importance of good quality Management Oversight and Supervision is directly linked to the quality of service and interventions received by our children and families. It provides a quality assurance measure and an opportunity to review case progression, the quality of the interventions directly linked with the processes followed to secure positive changes to the lives of our children, young people and families. With regular and robust management oversight and Supervision, there is likely to be less drift and delay in achieving permanency for our children (See Practice Note on Starting with the End in Mind: Children’s Plans).
* A good supervision discussion includes conversations about diversity and equality, whilst thinking about how our own values, bias and stereotypes may impact on the relationship we have with children and families, as well as with our supervisor/manager. The importance of recognising and understanding the children and family’s diverse backgrounds, their culture and identity whilst thinking about the type of services they should be offered, helps us to adjust our practice to ensure the interventions offered meet the needs of each unique and diverse family and enables us to work in culturally competent and anti-oppressive way.
* Supervision provides an opportunity for critical reflection, and opportunities for self-learning. Reflective supervision can add value, a safe space for a practitioner to slow down and think, explore possibilities, look for meaning and a way to do their work well and explore and self-assess the quality of their work with the support of their manager. It helps raise professional curiosity to explore all possible sources of information, to develop an analysis of root causes to understand a child’s lived experience.
* Supervision is important as it provides a space to support and further embed the strengths based, relational and trauma informed lens and values into all aspects of our work. For example, adopting this approach in supervision, supports us to consider the emotional, spiritual, political, physical moral and relational impact of our work. In addition to this, it helps us to recognise that we all have our own triggers, stressors, life experiences, multi-layered identities, biases, which can be triggered, resurfaced within the work that we do, and by providing a reflective and safe space, prioritising our wellbeing and self-care we will feel more supported to work effectively, by adjusting our practice (Treisman, 2019).
* Good quality Management oversight and Supervision involves modelling the use of a relational, strengths based and trauma informed approach which in turn can then be used when working with families. Just like the practitioner’s relationship with the family, the practitioner-manager relationship is one of unequal power which needs to be acknowledged when negotiating the relationship.

Developing an open and trusting relationship between practitioner and supervisor, identifying the practitioner’s strengths and the opportunities to use these in their work with families, by ensuring decisions are taken in partnership and in an environment in which practitioners and managers can give and receive honest and constructive feedback about practice is important. This is more likely to result in practitioners modelling this relational approach, increasing their sense of empathy with the families they work with, increased motivation and increase feelings of self-efficacy and confidence in practitioners, which in turn can influence staff retention (Oliver, 2014).

* Management Oversight and Supervision is underpinned by a range of Legislation and Policies that governs the work we do with children, young people and their families. Managers should have a good working knowledge of the legal framework and policies such as SCT’s Supervision Policy to ensure the correct legal framework is being applied.

This includes how using supervision tools such as David Kolb’s (1984) cycle of experiential learning has reflection at the core and could be used to support us to reflect on the work we do with children and families. Kolb’ cycle been adapted into a reflective model that can be used in supervision to explore the way that people learn, based on experience. As Kolb points out, ‘we do not simply learn through doing’.

In Sandwell, we are committed to providing excellent services for children and their families and to do so we recognise that regular, reflective, high quality and organised supervision helps create a workforce that understands their role and responsibilities, is accountable for work undertaken and has the skills, knowledge, behaviour and values to carry these out.

**How does using the Practice Framework and Model strengthen Management Oversight and Supervision?**

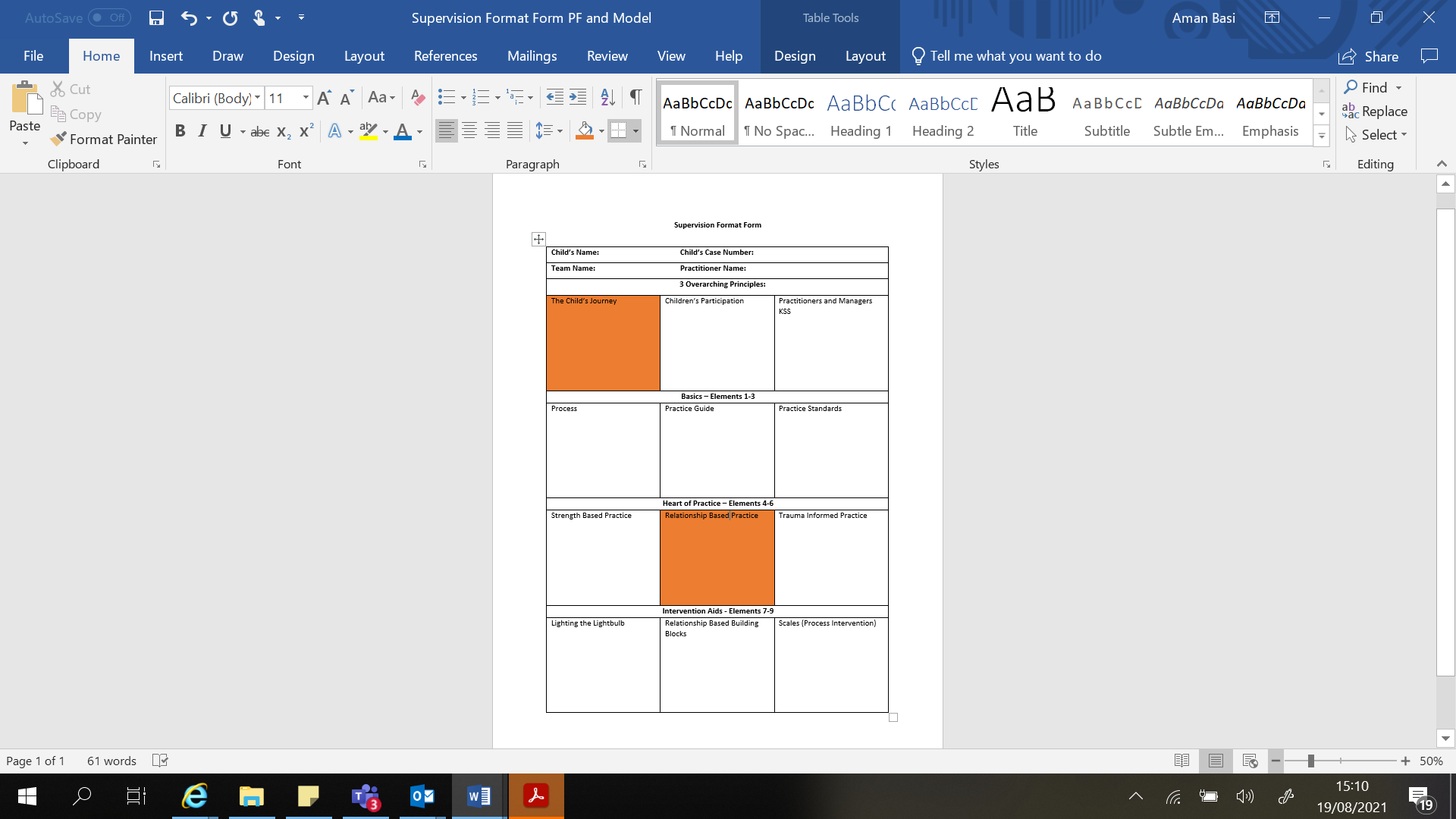
Our Practice Framework and Model has been developed using strengths-based, relationship-based and trauma-informed approaches at its heart to support our thinking when working with our families and their network. The relationship between Managers and practitioners should be based on openness and trust, which means they should be able to confidently challenge each other when practice is not at the expected standard and impacts on the work with children, young people and their families. This ensures that children and young people consistently receive a good service.

We will use the case study of Jamie and Annabelle, to illustrate how elements of our Practice Framework and Model can be used in supervision between Team Manager and Practitioner to support them to develop skills in providing good quality management oversight and reflective supervision.

Jamie is 5 years old and has a younger sister Annabelle, 1 year old and they are the children of Mick, Father and Vicky, Mother. The family identify as White British and reside in the Friar Park area of Wednesbury in Sandwell.

Sandwell Children’s Trust were previously involved with the family sporadically over the past three years due to domestic abuse between Mick and Vicky. There have been two police referrals historically, with the most recent indicating that Mick and Vicky were both perpetrators of abuse towards each other which ranged from verbal altercation to her being slapped. Vicky called her family and Mick was asked to leave and he is staying with Vicky’s brother. There were also concerns that Mick was heavily intoxicated during this incident, and that he often consumes large amounts of vodka daily.

The Social Worker has completed a Single Assessment and the children have been made subject to Child in Need plans for 8 weeks. The Social Worker is concerned that the children’s father is not ‘engaging’ with the plan and drift and delay in progressing the plan.



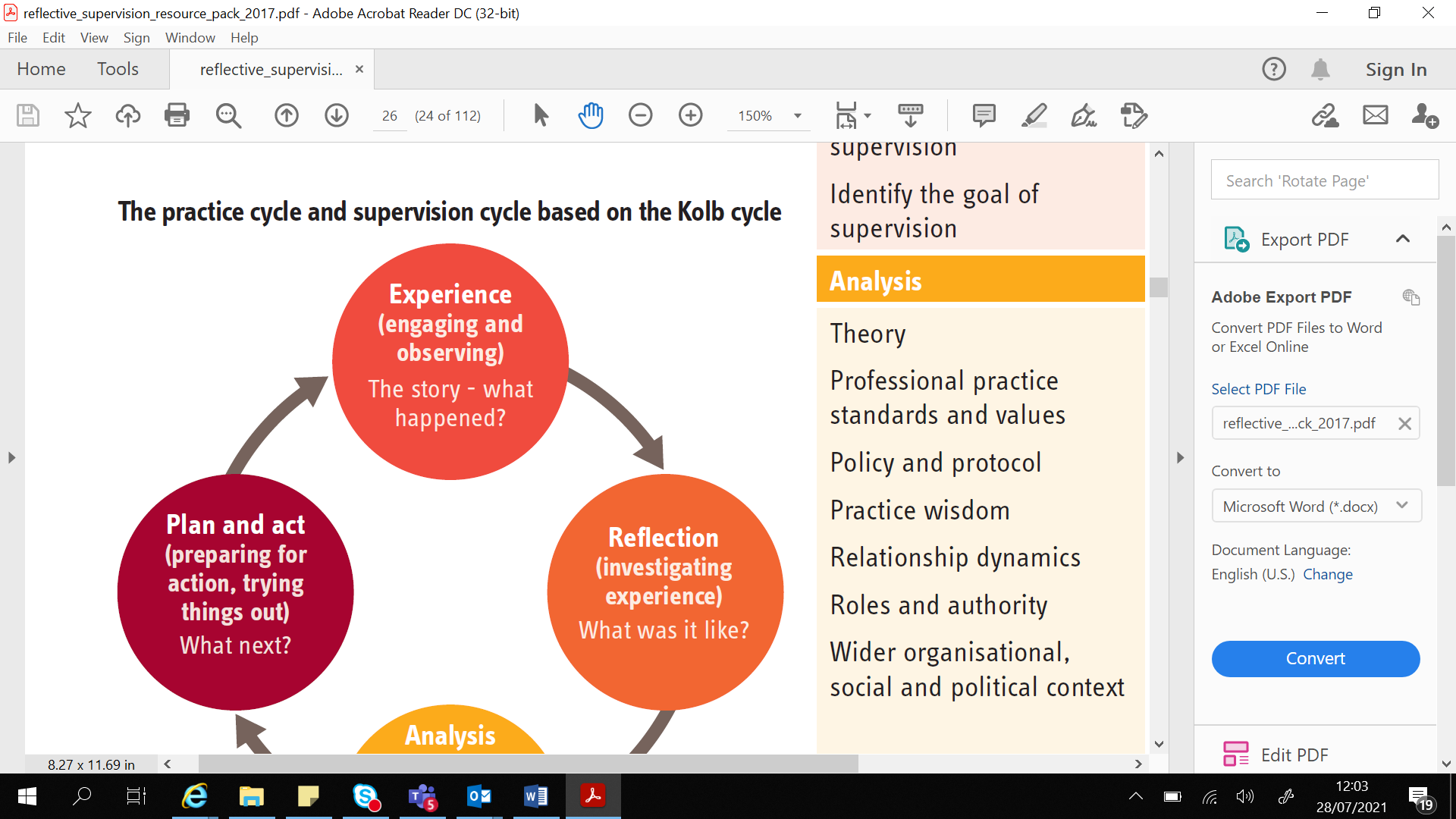
**Supervision preparation by the Social Worker**

Prior to case supervision, the Social Worker has identified that she would like to focus on the child’s journey and relationship-based practice with Mick when discussing this family with her manager. Using the relevant reflective questions in the Practice Framework model booklet (See pages 42-50 Practice Framework and Model Booklet).

She used the supervision format form (image left and Appendix A) as part of her supervision preparation to think through the questions and responses as well as identifying some of her own to support the reflection with her Manager.

**Reflections within Supervision between the Social Worker and Manager**

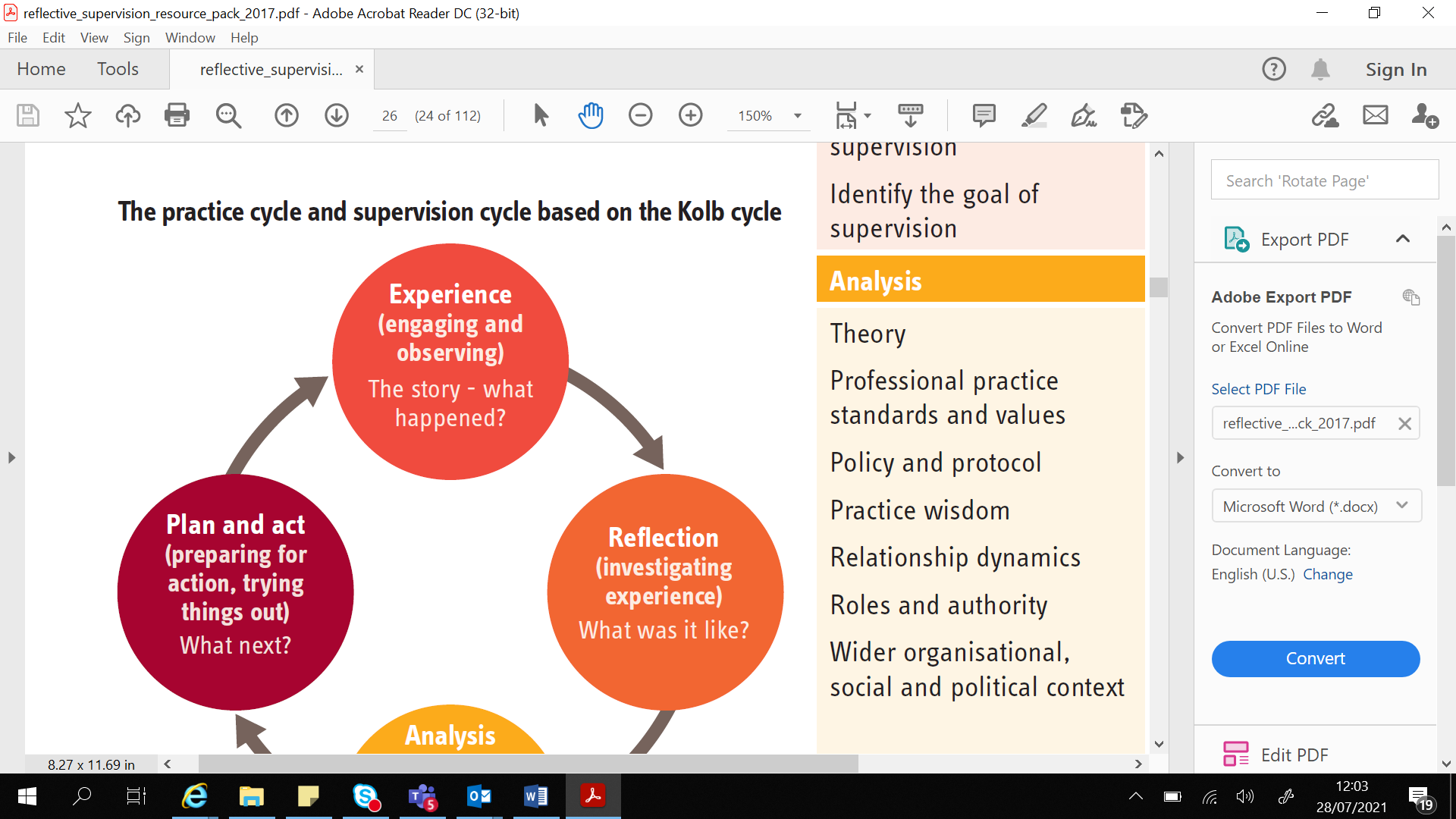
Using Kolb’s reflective model within our Practe Framework and Model and Supervision Policy to structure the case discussion and support the practitioner to critically reflect on her practice. The cycle (which was published in 1984) demonstrates how experience is transformed into learning via four stages: focusing on event recall, reflection on the information, analysis and planning for action. Morrison (2005) advocated using the cycle both in supervision and in practice. It can help practitioners understand a child or parent’s perspective through considering their experiences, the meanings given to those experiences and how families see their own future as a result (Gibbs et al, 2014).

Sharing the experience is the first stage of Kolb’s reflective cycle, and the Social Worker has shared Mick, Father is no longer ‘engaging’ with her, the plan is not pogressing and she feels ‘stuck’. As a starting point, the Manager ask the Social Worker to decribe Mick’s behaviour, what strategies she has alreay used and how long there has been an engagement issue

The Social Worker identified has been working with the family for around 12 weeks now, and doesn’t know why things have changed. Initially, he seemed to work really well with her when she was completing the single assessment. More recently, Mick seemed quite angry when he talked to her, swearing at her and told her the ‘kids don’t need a Social Worker, you just make things worse’ .. your not going to take them away’ and has slammed the front door when he has tried to speak to him. On occasions, he was also slurring his words and thinks he might have been under the influence of alcohol. She has contnud to see Vicky and the children at the family home.

She has interpreted this behaviour as ‘hostility’ from Mick and that he makes her feel anxious and that she hates confrontational situtions.

The Social Worker identified that this has happended twice before when Social Care were involved and the children’s case was closed without support being provided.

Moving onto the reflective stage of the cycle, to think about the Child’s Journey, the Team Manager used the reflective questions to reflect with the Social Worker, what her understanding is of the childrens’ journey (see Pracice Framework and Model Booklet page 42) in the context of the family.

* When we look at the child’s journey map, where is the next stage of the children/young person’s journey?
* How will they get there?
* What timescales do we need to consider and what will the checkpoints be?

The Social Worker explored this when she reviewed the impact chronology and life work undertaken with Vicky and shared their understanding of the children’s journey that they have been subject to Social Care involvment in Dudley. The Social Worker identified that Mick was reluctant to work with the Social Workers historically and the family moved to Sandwell when the concerns increased. This helped her to identify a pattern in his behaviours currently, the impact on the children and their timescales for change, whilst thinking about the relationship with Mick and how this could be strengthened.

Using the ‘**Child’s Journey’ map** alongside the reflective questions helped the Social Worker to think about the experience of each child whilst evaluating the quality of the previous support to strengthen our current intervention. Working with the family to support them to understand their Child’s Journey and the reason for professional worries may reduce some anxieties for families when we become involved. In other families, our involvement might trigger feelings linked to previous and current involvement. Acknowledging how families might feel when providing help and support to enables us to work in a relationship based and trauma informed way.

Working in a relationship-based manner, we are more likely to get a better understanding of both the strengths, resources and the difficulties impacting on them. It helps us to be more empathetic, attuned and be mindful of what can be a barrier and what can enable us to develop meaningful relationship with families. The Team Manager used the reflective questions to reflect with the Social Worker, the quality of her relationship with Mick in particular (see Practice Framework and Model Booklet page 47).

* Is this based on a good understanding of the identity and culture of the family and have the necessary adjustments been made to ensure that it is meaningful?
* What intervention have we undertaken with children/young people/young adults and the family to build a relationship with each individual family member?

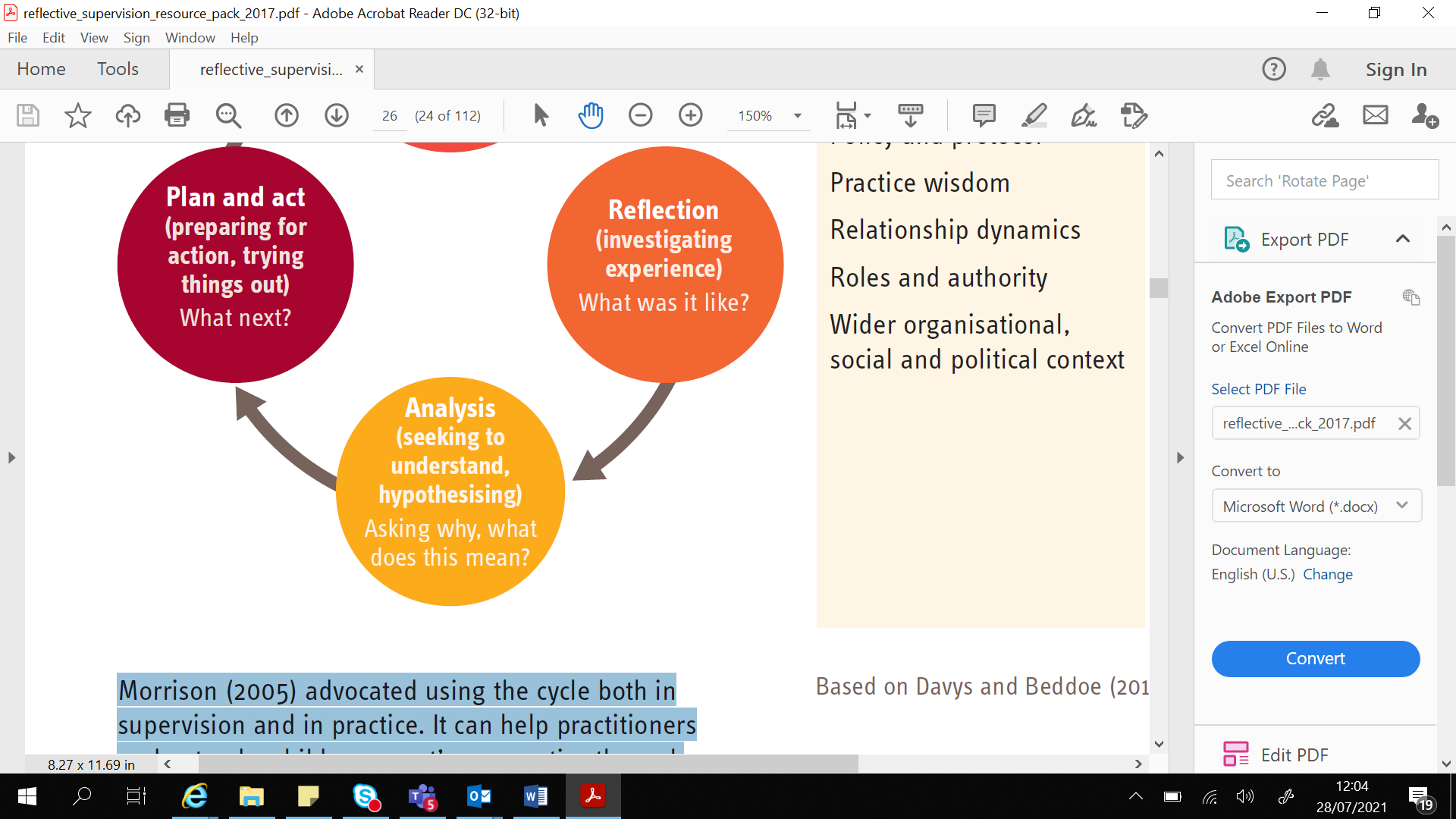
Using the **Relationship Based Building Blocks** supports the Social Worker identify which stage they are in their relationship with Mick which is still at the building stage. This enabled the Social Worker to identify that she had focussed solely on engaging Vicky throughout resulting in this relationship being at the maintaining and sustaining stage. With Mick, she identified as being in the initial rapport building stage, and there is a possibility that her involvement may have triggered feelings for him, that she has not responded to. Reflecting on this further she also considers his background history and the involvement with Children’s Services throughout his own childhood. Her initial hypothesis that father presented as ‘hostile’ and not engaging could also now be further understood in the context of his own lived experiences throughout childhood, as well as with Children’s Services in other authorities. In addition to this, the impact of on the children due to alcohol use, possibly any other substance use and his emotional health also need to be a consideration.

She reflected that strengthening her relationship with Mick by understanding the family’s culture and identity is crucial. She is aware that this family live in Friar Park in Wednesbury and the Social Worker had worked with families who live in the same area and encountered certain stereotypes about people that live in this specific area. The Social Worker considered how this might have shaped her judgement and perceptions of the family possibly leading to ‘unconscious bias’. Understanding the importance of being more objective and engaging the family more meaningfully by being ready to learn about their uniqueness, get to know the family functioning, history, traditions, own childhood experiences and how these may impact on their parenting.

As part of their reflective practice, the Social Worker has also considered their own background, upbringing, stereotypes and bias that may impact on the way they will work with this family. Using Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS (Burnham 2013) within supervision enabled them to think about our approach to working with individuals, recognise the power differentials, making the necessary adjustments whilst developing our cultural competence when working with families (Practice Notes Cultural Competence). The Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS were used to facilitate discussions between the Social Worker and managers in relation their own identities, and backgrounds, issues of their role, power and control an the difference to the children and families we work with.

For example, when working with the Social Worker to explore this, open questions to facilitate discussions could include:

* How would you describe your identity as a person?
* How might other people describe you?
* What aspects of your Social Graces are visible/invisible, or voiced/unvoiced?



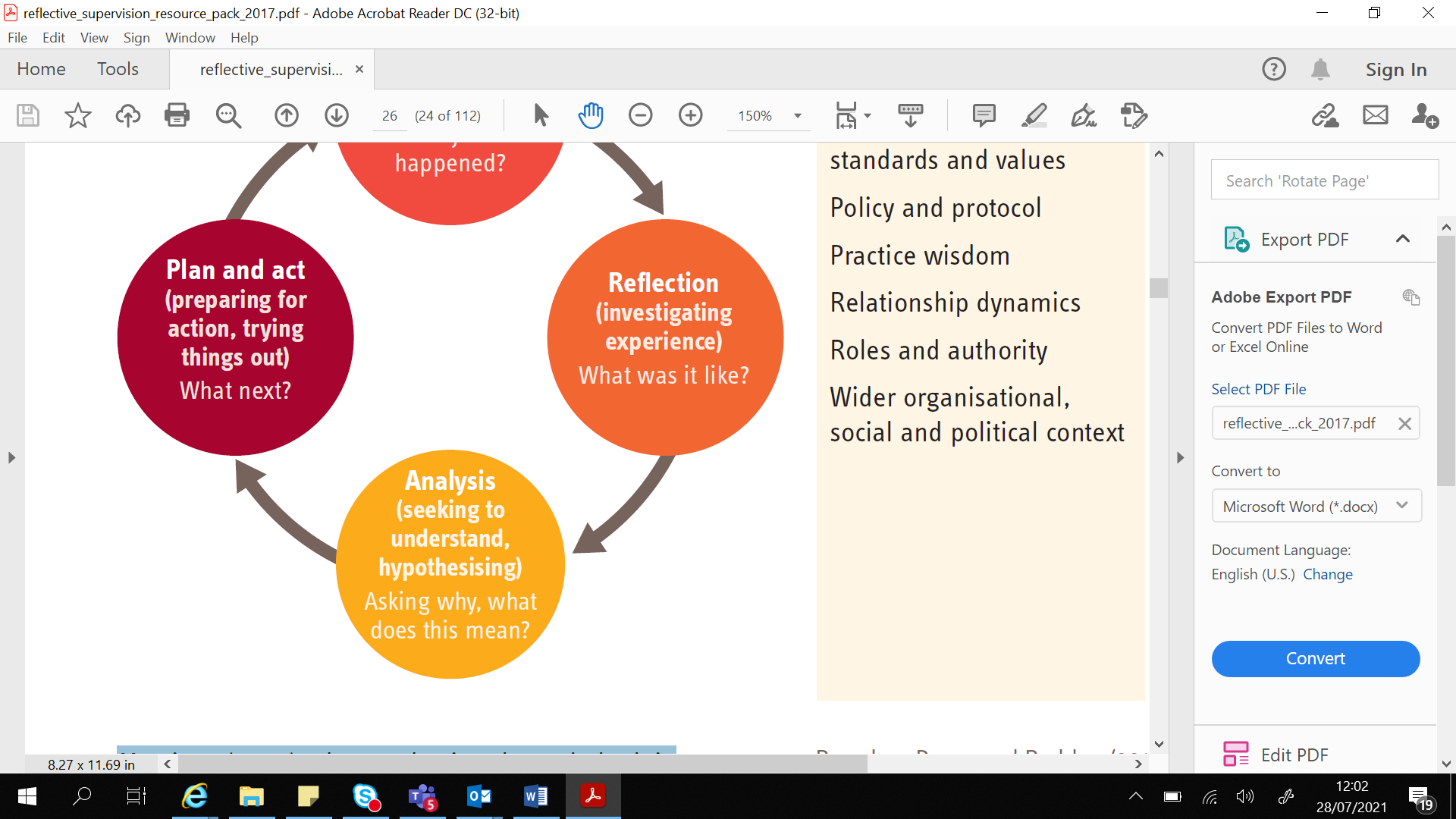
The third stage is our analysis stage, where we seek to make sense of the information or circumstances, supported by the use of hypotheses. By using the Basics as part of our Practice Framework and Model, the Social Worker reviewed Sandwell’s practice guidance on working with Non-Engaging families and identified that she needed to approach the issue in a more proactive way.

The Social Worker and Manager explored some of the ways she could work with Mick and the family by using a trauma informed and relational approach. He also had a positive and establishd relationship with his substance misuse worker, Andrew. Considering the hypotheses further the Social Worker identified that although she had identified Mick’s behaviour as hostility, on reflection, she feels that she did not have a good understanding of Mick’s experience, his families culture and identity, their journey and what her involvement might mean to them. She has been stuck in the ‘initial rapport building’ stage and considered that families will respond in different ways due to our involvement in the lives of their children and acknowledging their feelings, being clear about our worries and the help and support available.

Adopting a trauma informed approach and professional curosity helps to understand what impact Mick’s adverse childhood experiences has on family functioning, dynamics and relationships, with not only themselves but their network and wider world. It also helps the Social Worker and the family to identify any patterns and themes, such as domestic abuse being a feature in Mick and Vicky’s previous relationships, as well as in the Paternal Grandparents relationship. She has also reflected that she has not always wanted to address Mick’s behaviour and that sometimes she can find it intimidating. A plan to manage the possible risk is discussed so that it reduces the impact on her developing a relationship with Mick.

Using our Intervention Aids (see practice note on Intervention Aids) as a visual tool in supervision also helps us think about our practice balanced between process and intervention. Like the Light Bulb Principle, if we only focus on the process, Annabelle and Jamie’s lightbulb will not be lit. Using these aids ensures that consider whether we have worked wih the family to provide the light help and support to make the necessary changes. In doing so, the Social Worker has considered whether her approach has resulted in an equal balance between the process and intervention. Without a meaningful intervention there is limited progress and changes for families, potential increased risks and repeat involvement and start stop syndrome.

The Social Worker has shared their experience, reflected on what has been happenening, formulated several hypotheses and will move onto the final stage to to prepare for what needs to happen next.

Social Worker and Team Manager have identified actions to strengthen practice and outcomes for the children which include:

1.Focus on finding ways of engaging Mick, by asking to speak to him personally and also Andrew. Consider undertaking a joint visit within two weeks. Spend some time with Mick to understand his hopes and fears,what he thinks will help and what he thinks might help to develop the relationship and progress the work. Senior SW Support to be considered if requied.

2.Convene a CIN Review in 5 weeksto review the plan and the steps required to progress the CIN plan.

3.Update the **Cultural Genogram** further to explore the quality of Mick’s relationships, families culture and identity and patterns and themes in relationsips across three generations.

4.Update the **impact chronology** to also inform the work being undertaken with the family.

5.Complete **life work** with Mick individually to understand through direct work what is happening now and what has happened historically to understand root causes and presenting concerns.

6.Update the **safety plans** with the children, and their parents utilising Craunston Recovery Services Worker, who has a good relationship with Mick. This could include extended family support, as well as safe people for the children n four weeks.

Progresion of the recommndations to be reviewed in four weeks time with speficific focus on timescales for change for the chiildren an achieving permanence.

Using reflective spaces such as supervision strengthens our skills in consistently applying our Practice Framework and Model and embedding it within our practice. Supervision can offer a place to debrief from the emotional impact of social care. Resilience is developed through processing and learning from experience and developing an increased ability to anticipate and cope with adversity in the future.

Good quality Management Oversight and Supervision helps us to continually question assumptions and conclusions about families, introducing alternative points of view or strategies for unsticking difficult issues. Using supervision as an opportunity to explore identity, power, values, thinking about things like barriers to engagement, partnership working, resistance, hostility, disguised compliance, professional curiosity supports us to explore the needs of each unique family and how best we can work with them. It provides us with a way of thinking about how we might relate different individuals and families for several reasons. It means that we can think about what has resulted in us being able to develop enabling relationships and what might be a barrier when working with some families which we sometimes refer to being ‘stuck’.

**Good Practice Points and how Management Oversight and Supervision using the Practice Framework and Model can be evidenced on the child’s file?**

* Supervision records should be completed by using a strength based, relational an trauma informed approach alongside the other elements of the Practice Framework and Model and recorded on

the child’s file in forms.

* Management oversight and decision making should be recorded on LCS should evidence that it is underpinned by the Practice Framework and Model.
* Use the Supervision Format Form to record the preparation/reflective discussion so that it can go on the child's file as a reflective recording and be added as an attachment to your supervision record.
* Any direct work completed such as genograms, cultural genograms, life story work completed with the child, young person, parents, carers and their network should be uploaded onto documents with a linked case note providing an analysis of the assessment session and reflected upon in supervision.
* Encourage practitioners to develop their own learning not just through formal routes but through use of learning reviews in Supervision which provides a window back into practice.
* Reflect on the Child’s Journey within supervision, focusing on permanency for children and young people, and making a difference within the timescales for the child and young person.
* Supervision discussions should include parallel planning as a key focus whilst also, thinking about continuing support needs for the children or young person to ensure that permanence is secured in a timely way.

**Further Information and Reading**

* All Managers and practitioners should register with Community Care Inform and Research in Practice
* Effective supervision in social work and social care Adapted from SCIE Research Briefing 43: Carpenter, Webb, Bostock and Coomber, 2012.
* Briefing: The Role and Function of Supervision (Research in Practice, 2019)
* Sandwell Children’s Trust Policy: Working with Non-engaging families
* The Munro Review of child protection: An Interim Report; The Child’s Journey Page 53 par: 4.10).
* Kolb, D.A. (1984). Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*.*Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

**Appendices:**

Appendix A: Supervision Format Form



**Date of Practice Note:**  September 2021

**Date to be reviewed:** September 2022

**Authorised by:** Beyond Auditing Practice Development Team: Pauline Dunkwu and Aman Basi