

## What are the areas of a social worker's expertise?

Munro lists the following professional capabilities that child and family social workers must possess:

### Knowledge

- knowledge of child development and attachment
- understanding of the impact of parental problems such as domestic violence, mental ill health and substance misuse on a child's health and development at different stages
- knowledge of the impact of child abuse and neglect in the short term, long term and into adulthood

### Critical reflection and analysis

- the ability to analyse critically the evidence about a child and family's circumstances and use that analysis to make decisions
- skills in achieving some objectivity about what is happening in a child's life and assessing change over time

### Intervention and skills

- recognising and acting on signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect
- purposeful relationship-building with children, parents, carers and families
- skills of authoritative but compassionate working
- skills to assess family functioning, take a comprehensive family history and use this information when making decisions about a child's safety and welfare
- knowledge of theoretical frameworks and their effective application for the provision of therapeutic help
- knowledge about (and the skills to keep up to date with) relevant research on effective approaches, in particular where there are concerns about abuse or neglect
- understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other professionals and how child and family social workers can contribute their unique role as part of a multidisciplinary team
- skills in presenting and explaining issues to diverse audiences, including children and judges (Munro, 2011).

Keeping these capabilities in mind will help legal professionals to be clear about what can be expected from social workers in preparing and presenting evidence for the family court.