

## **Safeguarding in the Early Years – Reflective Paper**

During this essay, I will be reflecting on my experience of the topic safeguarding within the early years. I will be discussing my experience with safeguarding meetings, how to report an incident or how to make a referral, and how I have gained knowledge through researching and developed skills and professional understanding on a safeguarding conference. I will also be discussing our group work, what we did as a group to decide on the professionals to be involved in the initial child protection conference and how we decided on our roles. I will then be reviewing my independent research and how I was able to develop my knowledge and understanding within my role and how it will help me develop my personal and professional practice.

Firstly, my experience prior to researching and undertaking the module. Previously to the safeguarding module, I had no experience of attending a safeguarding meeting, or referring a safeguarding concern to a social worker or any outside agencies or professionals. I have previously reported my concerns to a leader at my setting, who would ask for a statement and inform management of the concerns. Management would then handle the referral or any concern that has raised. Due to having minimal experience within this field, it was important for me to research and understand what professionals were involved and what roles they had during these events. I also researched what legislations were relevant to the safeguarding conference and what legislated documents were linked to Wales and local authorities. Prior to this I researched and viewed many video clips of conference meetings to ensure I understood the correct process of the conference and what each professional contributed towards the meeting.

During our time as a group, we worked well together from the start, by ensuring all members of the group had a role, therefore they could research into the role given and then have an understanding on what their professional does within the conference. Before we decided on our roles, it was important to understand what professionals are involved within the conferences and what professionals link together and work as a multi-agency team. To do this we researched for government documents relating to the UK and found 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' from HM Government published in 2015. This document helped us to understand what

professionals and outside agencies are involved. This document helped us choose four professionals, a Social Worker, Health Visitor, Police Officer and a Keyworker to attend the initial child protection conference and to share their statements and documented concerns. We chose the four professionals as throughout researching multi-agencies, we felt that a Social Worker and Health Visitor work well together and have similar experiences such as home visits, the Keyworker knows the child well and can provide a statement from seeing the child day to day, and the Police Officer fitted in well with the story and works well alongside Social Workers. Following this, we researched further independently before coming together as a 'multi-agency' and sharing our information and statements as a team, and then to decide on the conclusion of the conference.

My role was to be the Health Visitor. By having minimal experience of these events, I ensured to research the Health Visitor's role, and their involvement in a safeguarding conference. After researching into The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and The Children's Act (1989 and 2004) to understand what responsibilities I have as the Health Visitor, it gave me further knowledge on my role and helped me to understand the children's rights in more depth. After researching, I asked the Health Visitor at the setting for a meeting with myself to discuss her role and what actions she would take if there was a real incident occurring. This helped me to understand what actions should be taking place and what would be the next steps in the event. By meeting the Health Visitor and asking her questions it enabled me to further my knowledge in the area and to develop skills and confidence for the future. It was important for me to understand how the multi-agency approach works and how effective it is, therefore alongside researching I discussed this with the Health Visitor and she explained the importance and by all professionals working together it creates a more structured approach which becomes a stronger decision and more beneficial for the family and child/children.

During the process of preparing for the initial child protection conference, I researched into the correct procedures of making a referral and how a safeguarding/child protection conference is organised and completed. To do this I researched into the local safeguarding children board in my area, (Newport Safeguarding Children Board, 2012) which helped me develop in terms of knowledge and skills relating to this module, and helped me to have in depth understanding of the

process. Following research into the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, it was important to me to find out more information regarding safeguarding children in my area and what were the procedures. According to Citizens Advice in 2017, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board is set up by the local authority and has a strategic role in protecting children within the designated area. Citizens Advice state that the Local Safeguarding Children's Board is a multi-agency group which is within every local authority around the UK. All Safeguarding Children's Board around Wales have identical roles and the same organisations that represent the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Their main role is to organise all outside agencies and organisations that represent the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children within that area. The professionals and organisations that represent the Safeguarding Children's Board around Wales are;

- The Police
- Health Services
- Probation Services
- The Local Youth Offending Team
- CAFCASS Cymru (Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service)
- Representatives in the Community (For example, The NSPCC or Barnados)

While researching and furthering my knowledge on the Local Safeguarding Children's Board it has given me a deeper understanding of who can be involved within the initial child protection conference, the correct procedures of making a referral and how a safeguarding/child protection conference is organised and completed.

After researching into my role, speaking to the Health Visitor and researching more information regarding the Local Safeguarding Children's Board it was clear to me that safeguarding is not only professional's responsibilities, but it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the child/children in their care is safe and not in harm. According to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008) 'The effective protection of children cannot be achieved by a single agency acting on its own'. This means by having a multi-agency approach it ensures that children are being observed by more than one professional, therefore, if something is missed there are other

opportunities for it to be noticed and documented. The Local Safeguarding Children's board have now been advised by the Clywch Report to keep a register of protocols to protect children, and there are currently 28 protocols to date.

During the process of preparing for the initial child protection conference, it was important for me to understand the legislations that have given the process of referrals and how the conference concludes with regards to the statements and documents provided by the professionals. Firstly, legislative framework relates to safeguarding as it ensures that everyone follows the correct policies and procures of having children in their care. This relates to The Care Standards Act 2000 which ensures that all industries working with and involving children follow the same guidelines and standards of care, safeguarding, hygiene, education, health and safety and staff. This helps the government to ensure that all settings are following the same guidelines and are being checked regularly by CSSIW (2017) who regulate and inspect childcare settings for improvement and to ensure all are following the Care Standards Act guidelines to provide a safe environment for children. The Childcare Act 2006 links to the Care Standards Act 2000 as it emphasises the importance of care and protection standards with relation to childcare settings and emphasis on the child's well-being, ensuring that the environment encourages positive wellbeing. However, although there are many policies and procedures in place within childcare settings, the children also have human rights. The Human Rights Act 1998 state that children have the right to life, the right to freedom of expression, the right to a family life and the right to education. The Children Act 1989 also states the importance of the child's voice and that the child's welfare is paramount, this is a child centred approach where the child has their rights and they are not allowed to be extracted of them.

However, before this module I had little understanding of legislations and why childcare settings and their staff must follow criteria. To ensure staff are appropriate to work with children within a childcare setting it is important for employers to follow the Protection of Children Act 1999, which identifies individuals that are unable to work with children for many reasons. The Protection of Children Act 1999 ensures that all staff have a clear DBS by having no previous criminal records. After ensuring the individual is safe to work with children, they must have an understanding and recognise signs of abuse. Due to the nature of work, staff are likely to have this understanding but may be unsure on how to make a referral or what to do next. This

was my experience and situation within the safeguarding field, being able to recognise signs of abuse but not understanding the text steps. This module and researching for the initial child protection conference has enabled me to further my knowledge and gain confidence in making referrals. I now understand that all local authorities must ensure that they have effective systems in place which allow individuals and agencies to recognize and respond to these concerns. When having a concern regarding a child it is important to ensure all concerns have been documented in a clear, factual way with correct and concise information and includes a signature and date. When this information is being documented it is important to keep in a secure locked cabinet with only management having access due to confidentiality. When storing these concerns, we must use the correct usage and storage of data and by sharing data correctly on a need to know basis (Data Protection Act 1998). Throughout this module it has made me more aware of the process of sharing information on a 'need to know basis'. This has made me aware of being a professional my priority is to safeguard the child/children within my care, therefore, if the concern is minor such as the child wearing unsuitable clothing, unfitted shoes etc then it would be good practice to inform parents/carers of the concern/referral due to then receiving parental consent. However, if the child is in significant harm, then it is our duty to ensure the child is safe and therefore inform social services (Children Act, 1989). If the child is in significant harm then social services will then undertake a section 47 which gives authorities power to remove the child/children immediately from the situation, this is known as immediate protection of a child/children. Although, many cases are taken to an initial child protection meeting, where many outside agencies and professionals meet to discuss their concerns and statements of the family. The professionals will discuss and share their information and then conclude whether the child should be put on the child protection list or whether it is a child in need. The professional will then work with the family to support them throughout this period.

To conclude, at the beginning of the safeguarding module I had no experience or in-depth knowledge regarding referrals, child protection conferences and their conclusions and what happened following these events. Due to researching into these processes, legislations and undertaking a role within a child protection conference my knowledge has extended greatly within this area and I now feel confident a

professional practitioner to make these decisions independently and be able to proceed within my career with in-depth knowledge of the subject safeguarding.

All Wales Child Protection Procedures. (2008) 'Multiagency approach'  
file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/All-Wales-Child-Protection-Procedures-2008.pdf  
[Accessed: 29/11/2017].

Care Standards Act. (2000) 'Arrangement of Sections'  
[https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/pdfs/ukpga\\_20000014\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/14/pdfs/ukpga_20000014_en.pdf)  
[Accessed: 29/11/2017].

Childcare Act. (2006) 'Chapter 21'  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/pdfs/ukpga\\_20060021\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/21/pdfs/ukpga_20060021_en.pdf)  
[Accessed: 29/11/2017].

Children Act 1989, 2004. London: HMSO, 1989.

Citizens Advice. (2017) 'Local Safeguarding Children Boards'  
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/family/children-and-young-people/child-abuse/what-is-child-abuse/local-safeguarding-children-boards/> [Accessed: 28/11/2017].

CSSIW. (2017) 'Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales'  
<http://cssiw.org.uk/?lang=en> [Accessed: 29/11/2017].

Data Protection Act. (1998) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>  
[Accessed: 30/11/2017].

HM Government. (2015) 'Working together to safeguard children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'  
<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/Working-Together-to-Safeguard-Children-2015.pdf> [Accessed: 29/11/2017].

Human Rights Act. (1998) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>  
[Accessed: 29/11/2017].

Newport Safeguarding Children Board. (2012) 'Children and young people'  
<http://www.scin.org.uk/children-and-young-people/> [Accessed: 28/11/2017].

Protection of Children Act. (1999)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/14/contents> [Accessed: 29/11/2017].

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989) 'How we protect children's rights with the UN Convention on the rights of the child'

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/> [Accessed: 29/11/2017].