

ECEY5011/C Safeguarding Portfolio and Reference List**Chosen Case Study - 3****Part A)**

As suggested by Briggs (2020), recognising signs and symptoms of abuse in children should be considered a priority for all practitioners, as it prevents the offences from reoccurring. As seen in case study three, there are many indicators that raise cause for concern for the key worker within the setting. This includes, the child visiting the toilet multiple times, whilst also suggesting that her genital area is painful when using the toilet. The causes for these concerns could be a variety of reasons, for example, the child may be suffering from a water infection, however, as suggested by Bristol Childminding Network (2020), practitioners should record any safeguarding concern, even if there is no need to further refer it to a higher authority, such as a safeguarding board. Furthermore, the practitioner later discusses the concerns with the parents and notices that the mother of the child is quiet, and the dad insists on doing all the talking, demonstrating controlling dominant behaviour. As suggested by the National Centre for Domestic Violence (no date), it is common for those who are experiencing domestic violence to be withdrawn and submissive. The father further claims that the child is just playing games with the practitioner. As discussed by Labuski (2015) this can be considered a cause for concern as it is rare for young children to lie about instances of pain, especially in the genitalia area. Alongside this, if a parent continues to be dismissive of such worries, this raises suspicion of a potential case of neglect or abuse.

Additionally, the practitioner later hears the child crying from the toilets, when approaching the child, the practitioner notices she is naked from the waist down, along with visible discharge and redness of her genitals. When asked by the practitioner if anything had happened, the child responds by saying that her daddy told her it was "their little secret". This is a major cause for concern, as indicated by Adams, *et al.* (2018) there are numerous symptoms that indicate potential sexual abuse, these include injury, inflammation, and soreness around or on the genitals.

As supported by NSPCC (no date) sexual abuse can occur when a child or young person is tricked, forced, or manipulated into doing sexual acts. They further discuss

that many children do not understand what is happening to them, or what their abuser is doing is wrong.

As supported by Lemaigre, *et al.* (2017), some children try to express their experiences with sexual abuse, however, many children feel that individuals may not take them seriously, or even believe them. Consequently, as supported by Australian Government (2015), practitioners are advised to respond appropriately when disclosing suspicions of abuse or neglect. Morrison, *et al.* (2018) explains that many children may feel embarrassed, upset, or angry after disclosing their troubles, therefore practitioners should be aware of their body language and way of speaking, as a display of emotions can cause children to become distressed.

Hailes, *et al.* (2019) emphasises the detrimental impact sexual abuse can have on a child's holistic development, along with the violation of children's rights. Further supported by Borg, *et al.* (2014) many children progress into adulthood with serious physical and psychological issues, this includes drug and alcohol misuse, the inability to form relationships later in life, and obesity in adulthood.

When recording concerns regarding abuse or neglect, although confidentiality is highlighted by the Data Protection Act 2018, NSPCC (2023) suggests if a professional believes that a child is suffering from abuse or neglect, they have an entitlement to share information with the correct agencies or professionals without receiving authorisation from the child or their parents. As noted within the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014, along with NSPCC (2023) explains that it is advised that practitioners take accurate, detailed written notes, including the child's personal information (name, age, and address), what has given the practitioner a cause for concern, and any information the child has disclosed. Gathering this information ensures that if or when these concerns are reported to a safeguarding board, the notes can be used as evidence. As supported by Ann Craft Trust (no date) when taking notes, it is important for practitioners to note down in the child's vocabulary, word-for-word what has been disclosed, this is to avoid potential misinterpretation and assumptive bias.

When seeking answers regarding possible abuse or neglect suspicions, practitioners will likely find themselves questioning both the children and their caregivers. As suggested by McElvaney (2015), when questioning a child about what has happened

to them, it is recommended that all practitioners do not interrogate the child, and choose their words carefully, ensuring to only ask open-ended questions. This enables the child to answer freely and truthfully, preventing them from being led into an answer.

Part B)

After sufficient evidence of potential abuse inflicted on a child has been collected, the situation may demand an escalation by notifying the appropriate agency or professional. For example, the Welsh Government (no date), suggests that if evidence indicates a child is in immediate danger, it is advised that the appropriate authorities are contacted directly. If disclosed that the child is in immediate physical danger, it is important that the police are contacted promptly, this is to inhibit further injury to be caused to the child. This can be referred to as a safeguarding report or referral. Utilising the relevant evidence collected, the details of the case regarding the child will be reported, providing a detailed overview of the situation. This aims to inform the appropriate authority of the exact reasoning behind the necessity for potential further action beyond the means of the childcare setting.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provides the legal framework for social service provision in Wales. It aims to improve the well-being of those who are vulnerable. Since the tragic case of Victoria Climbié (2000), The social services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, requires all local authorities across Wales and England to implement a Local Safeguarding Children Board. As suggested by Estyn (no date) Local Safeguarding Children Boards were put into effect to protect the safety and welfare of children within the local area. They also promote multi-agency working with children's best interests in mind. As supported by Wales' Safeguarding Procedures (2019), the safeguarding process begins when a report is made to the local safeguarding board or social services team. After reviewing a report, the referred team decides on the appropriate action to be taken. Following on from this, if evidence insinuates the child is suffering, the team then holds a strategy discussion meeting. This is to deliberate on whether Section 47 inquiries are necessary. Section 47 inquiries are the investigation process where professionals are able to gather novel information from various multi-agency professionals. If it is determined that a child is at risk of significant harm, a multi-agency child protection conference will be organised to allow professionals from different fields to discuss the well-being of the child.

As supported by NSPCC (2023) it is emphasised that practitioners should not ignore or dismiss any skepticism about a colleague, professional, or guardian who may be abusing or putting a child at risk. For instance, if a practitioner notices a child who is attending a setting with poor hygiene, as a one-time occurrence, some practitioners may want to monitor the situation or discuss this matter with the child's parents, as this could be due to a lack of funds within the household.

As detailed within the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019), it is important that a referral is made to social services as soon as a concern or suspicion becomes evident. During closure times, a referral can be made through the social services emergency duty service or the police force. Furthermore, all concerns can and are advised to be shared with social services by referral. Though this may not initiate an investigation immediately, it can later be used to establish a full understanding of a case, in combination with other evidential sources, such as medical records and police reports. According to Fortson, *et al.* (2016) collating this information, more effective action can be taken to safeguard the child. They further discuss how the successful referral of potential child abuse can be critical in preventing further harm inflicted to the child. Additionally, Christian & Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (2015) explains that successful escalation can better support the child's family in cases of familial issues such as, substance abuse, financial poverty, and disability. This ensures a safer environment for a child's future.

Part C)

As mentioned in Article 19 of the United Nations of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2019), all children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and maltreatment from their parents or caregivers. Linking this to Wales Safeguarding Procedures' (no date) discussion on the practitioner's responsibility to safeguard children, including protection from harm inflicted by a fellow practitioner, professional, or volunteer. This duty further extends into everyday life, meaning if a practitioner notices harmful behaviour towards a child through personal connections, such as family, friends, and strangers, they should still report their concerns. Furthermore, it is highlighted within the Children's Act 2004, that all individuals working with children should be aware of their roles and responsibilities. This includes safeguarding and protection of all children. As supported by NSPCC Learning (2023),

it is the setting's responsibility to ensure all staff are knowledgeable of how to recognise and respond to potential abuse concerns. As well as this, it is important for all working staff to stay up to date with the latest statutory guidelines and frameworks such as Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), as this educates all professionals on how to work within partnerships to ensuring the safety of children. Argued by Hood, *et al.* (2017) it is a practitioner's responsibility to work with multi-agencies, maintaining awareness of the correct procedures of contact when approached with complex situations such as abuse or neglect. Prior to the distressing case of Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells, the Criminal Records Bureau was implemented to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. However, due to inconsistencies, the UK government put in place a new, enhanced, thorough, screening service. Furthermore, it is a requirement that all settings screen any potential employees or volunteers, this can be done using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. As supported by GOV.UK (no date) a DBS check enables employers and institutions to gain a further insight into an individual's background, this includes convictions, or criminal records. By doing so, childcare facilities prevent possible dangerous individuals from accessing vulnerable children. Whilst The United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (2019) can be beneficial to individuals caring for children, it is a practitioner's duty to inform children of their rights, when possible. As developed within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) a child's development is influenced by multiple surrounding systems, each of which has their own impact on the child's growth and development. Practitioner's awareness of this is key to effective practice as it continuously upholds the importance and impact of their role in safeguarding and nurturing children. Further mentioned within article 3 of the UNCRC (2019) all educators should prioritise the best interests of the child. This can mean making difficult decisions such as, causing short term emotional distress from involving higher authorities such as the police force, although this can be upsetting, it creates long term protection for the child.

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