

Portfolio- Case Study 1

Recognising and Recording

According to NSPCC (2024) spotting the signs of child abuse can be difficult as they are not always obvious. They agree that it can also depend on the type of abuse as to what signs or symptoms may be noticeable and believe that signs of different types of abuse can differ, for example, signs of neglect can be different to signs of physical or sexual abuse. However, they agree with Welsh Government (2024) that unexplained changes in behaviour, becoming unusually aggressive, inappropriate awareness of adult issues or being withdrawn can all be signs, but believe that it does not mean that a child is being abused if these signs are present and both state that there may be other issues affecting them. As seen in case study 1, Joanna started off as a happy, outgoing, confident and independent child but recently her behaviour has changed and she has now become quiet, clingy and reluctant to leave the teaching assistant's side. This suggests a change in behaviour without explanation. Observing children regularly ensures there is an awareness of the individual holistically which can help practitioners to become aware of any changes that may occur that could be due to all forms of abuse (Bruce, Louis and McCall, 2015).

Similarly, Social Care Wales (2024) agree that concerns may not be from signs of abuse and rather the suspicions of a practitioner that have been built up from a variety of sources, such as the child, a family member or the class teacher, but may not be significant alone. However, with evidence or sources from other agencies involved with the child, they may help to build a picture which suggests that the child is suffering abuse. Hobart and Frankel (2010) suggest that recognising abuse is not easy but state that as a childcare practitioner it is not the job to determine whether the child is being abused or at risk of harm but there is a responsibility to be aware of the child protection procedures to enable them to recognise signs and symptoms more easily. They agree that if a child is victim to a form of abuse, they are more than likely to suffer an emotional effect on their intellectual development and their behaviour, so state that practitioners should be aware of this and ensure consideration of the holistic child. As suggested in case study 1, Joanna had become emotionally effected as she is no longer a confident, happy child. Similarly, NSPCC Learning (2024) agree that anyone working or volunteering with children should receive mandatory safeguarding and child protection training to ensure they can safeguard a child should they need to.

As stated in case study 1, the teaching assistant noticed bruising on Joanna's body, close to her ribs as she reached over for glue. NSPCC (2024) agree that all children have bumps and bruises, but it is a concern when they are in unusual or tricky places to bruise.

Due to Joanna giving no explanation of how she got the bruises it would be essential that the teaching assistant did not make assumptions as to where the child got the bruises and would be beneficial for her to use open ended questions to try and gain information from Joanna whilst considering her views, wishes and feelings and promoting and respecting her dignity (*Social Services and Well-Being Act (Wales) 2014 Part 2.6*).

All Wales Child Protection Procedures (2008) states that after recognising the bruises on Joanna, the teaching assistant would need to record the information accordingly, in line with the settings policies and procedures, whether it is in ink or digitally, ensuring the use of accurate, concise and clear language whilst only using facts and ensuring the information is not opinionated by oneself. The document would need to be signed by the teaching assistant recording the information and the time and date specified. The information should then be stored safely following setting policy and procedures and should also be able to be retrieved by appropriate practitioners for future reference when required.

Although in case study 1, Joanna got upset and did not want to talk when asked about the bruises by the teaching assistant, it is important to know how to deal with a disclosure should a child make one. According to NSPCC (2024) responding to a disclosure appropriately will help the child feel more comfortable in doing so. They agree that listening carefully and patiently without expressing own feelings and views is best to ensure the child keeps talking and does not withdraw the information. They also agree that by letting the child know that they have done the right thing by sharing the information and reassuring them that what has happened is not their fault and that you will take them seriously, can have a positive impact on them feeling supported. However, they believe that it is important that the child is made aware that the disclosure will need to be shared with someone who is able to offer them help and support.

Reporting and Referring

Cysur (2020) agree that if practitioners have doubts about reporting a concern about a child and are thinking 'What if I'm wrong?', they should speak out and instead, think 'What if I'm

right?’. They believe that concerns should never be left to someone else and the person who has the concerns should act promptly and let the correct agencies know. They state that contacting the police or social services and explaining the worries or concerns can ensure that the child in question comes to no significant harm. Similarly, UNICEF (no date) believe that all children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents and anyone else who cares for them, as stated in article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In case study 1, as the teaching assistant has a suspicion of physical abuse it would be the duty of care to report the concerns. According to Estyn (2023) after noticing the bruising on Joanna, the information should then also be passed onto the settings designated safeguarding officer, who should then make a referral if necessary. *Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014* Section 130 and Social Care Wales (2024) agree that practitioners have a duty of care to report to the relevant authority, if they have reason to believe that a child is at risk of harm. Similarly, *Children Act 1989* Section 17 agrees that practitioners have a general duty to provide support to those children who are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health and development.

Social Care Wales (2024) state that any agency who is contacted for information regarding a child who may be at risk of harm has a duty to work collaboratively, cooperate and share information with other practitioners who are considering the safeguarding of a child under Section 164 of the *Social Service and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014*. However, when sharing information, *Data Protection Act 2018* and Estyn (2023) state that practitioners should consider the proportion of information shared and ensure that only relevant information is passed on to other agencies involved, to protect the child’s confidentiality.

According to HM Government (2024) practitioners should be able to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote their welfare and prevent concerns from escalating. They agree that as a teaching assistant, in case study 1, the practitioner should be aware of the systems within the school whilst supporting safeguarding. They also agree that staff should be aware of the process of making referrals to the local authority and the role they might be expected to take in assessments to determine if child protection is needed. Similarly, HM Government (2023) agrees that anyone with concerns for a child’s welfare due to risk or suffering of significant harm should make a referral immediately.

Whilst reporting concerns of risk or suffering of significant harm, should be paramount for practitioners working alongside children, NSPCC Learning (2024) recognise that there can be

potential barriers to effectively raising concerns or taking action to protect a child's safety and well-being. They believe that practitioners may sometimes feel that they have insufficient evidence or details of the concern to pass on to the relevant agencies. They also agree that some practitioners can be unfamiliar with the safeguarding policies and procedures at their setting so can be unaware of what is expected of them during such concerns. They state that another barrier to reporting concerns can sometimes be fears and believe that there can be fears of different types. They state that it can be through fear of their own safety, or the safety of those children involved as well as fears of being wrong about the concerns or a fear of not being believed or listened to about the concerns. However, Hughes and Owen (2009) agree that practitioners should not allow barriers to prevent them from reporting concerns as they should always protect children from maltreatment, prevent impairment of their health, well-being and development and ensure they can grow up with provision of safe and effective care.

When reporting concerns and making a referral to the appropriate agencies and authority, according to UNICEF (no date) the children's best interests should always be a top priority in any decisions or actions taken that may affect them in any way, as stated in article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Settings Responsibilities

According to HM Government (2022) everyone working in an education setting who encounters children is responsible for safeguarding. In case study 1, the teaching assistant would be required to act immediately after noticing the bruising on Joanna. Practitioners are required to do so by creating and maintaining a safe learning environment, identifying concerns and taking action to address them in partnership with other agencies where appropriate and developing children's understanding, awareness and resilience through the curriculum.

According to Estyn (2023) education settings should follow their policies and procedures for safeguarding. They state that they update their policies and procedures annually so that all staff members can be aware of the up-to-date versions, know what to do if they come across a safeguarding concern and understand why they must follow certain policies and procedures. Similarly, the *Education Act 2002* Section 175 states that the governing body of maintained

schools must ensure that the functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children who are pupils at the school.

UNICEF (no date) agree that all settings that involve children should always follow all articles stated in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child as they believe that children have rights in all areas and that everyone has a duty to ensure that children are allowed to exercise those rights during all that they do. This would ensure that the best interests of the child are paramount and are always considered. Similarly, the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011* states that practitioners have a duty to have due regard to Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Department for Education (2024) states that anyone working or seeking to work in activity relating to children must agree to an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check with children's barred list information which allows additional checks to be made along with the Police National Computer records, to ensure that the person is safe to work alongside children. In case study 1, the teaching assistant is not aware of how Joanna got the bruising as Joanna refused to reply when questioned, however, it is not an impossibility that she received the bruising from a practitioner. Therefore, it is important for the management to ensure that all staff working alongside children are as safe as possible. Social Care Wales (2024) believe that if a child was to disclose an allegation against a practitioner, it would still be necessary for it to be reported in the same manner as if it was an allegation of an outsider of the setting. However, they state that if the allegation was against the designated safeguarding officer, it would then need to be reported to a more senior manager or the Chair of Governors.

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