

ECEY5011

Safeguarding: Practice, Legislation and the Multi-disciplinary team.

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1. Self-Reflection

Part 1

Before beginning this module, my understanding of safeguarding was limited to the basics covered in workplace training. I knew the signs to look for and understood the importance of reporting concerns, but my knowledge was largely procedural. I understood what actions to take, but I didn't fully grasp why safeguarding was important or how it functioned beyond the immediate environment. My perspective was narrow; I viewed safeguarding as a reactive measure rather than a proactive approach, and I lacked insight into the broader systems and responsibilities involved.

Throughout the module, my understanding deepened significantly. I was introduced to the legal foundations, such as the Children Act and the Care Act, which underpin our safeguarding practices. What struck me was the amount of responsibility placed on professional judgment, knowing when to act, who to involve, and how to keep the

individual at the centre of decision-making. This represented a significant shift for me. I transitioned from seeing safeguarding as merely 'spotting abuse' to recognising it as the protection of an individual's right to safety, dignity, and well-being.

A key takeaway from this experience was the crucial role of the multi-disciplinary team. Previously, I had a general understanding that professionals collaborated, but I didn't fully grasp how essential this collaboration is. The module helped me recognise the roles of various agencies: social care, police, health, and education, and highlighted the need for clear and consistent communication among them. Poor communication or unclear boundaries between professionals can lead to serious consequences. I now understand how vital trust, respect, and the sharing of information are in safeguarding work.

The emotional aspect of safeguarding also had a significant impact on me during this module. Reading case reviews where interventions occurred too late underscored just how high the stakes are. It's easy to become focused solely on tasks in practice, but these real-life stories reminded me that safeguarding is fundamentally about people, not just policies. I realised how important it is to remain professionally curious, to ask questions, to observe, and to never assume that someone else will take responsibility.

After completing the module, I feel more confident and prepared to respond to safeguarding concerns. I am also emotionally invested in doing it well. I now understand that safeguarding is not a one-time action but an ongoing commitment that requires awareness, reflection, and courage. I am more conscious of my duty to act, while also recognising the importance of listening carefully, collaborating as part of a team, and prioritising the individual's voice in every situation.

This learning has already begun to influence my approach to situations at work. I feel more capable of identifying risks, raising concerns, and effectively engaging with other professionals. Most importantly, I am now more committed to being proactive, rather than just reacting to potential dangers. I strive to create safe and supportive environments every day.

Part 2

Effective safeguarding depends on practitioners' understanding and implementing five interconnected principles: recognising, recording, reporting, referring, and understanding their responsibilities. Each element is essential to ensure a coordinated and timely response, which significantly affects outcomes for vulnerable individuals (Munro, 2011; Department for Education, 2023).

The first step in safeguarding is to recognise the signs of abuse or neglect. Early detection is crucial because it provides opportunities for intervention and protection. Munro (2011) emphasises that effective safeguarding begins with the ability to notice both subtle and overt indicators of harm, which can manifest physically, emotionally, or behaviourally. Practitioners are encouraged to adopt a professionally curious mindset, looking beyond surface explanations to address any inconsistencies (Davies and Ward, 2018; Patel and Green, 2022).

The Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004 impose a legal responsibility on professionals to take immediate action when a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm. Research supports this, with Sidebotham and Brandon (2020) noting that many Serious Case Reviews uncover missed opportunities due to failures in early identification or response. These failures often arise from professional desensitisation, over-familiarity, or a lack of critical examination (Taylor et al., 2021).

The importance of effective early recognition was powerfully highlighted in the Laming Report (The Victoria Climbié Inquiry, 2003), which revealed systemic failures across multiple agencies, including poor communication, lack of professional curiosity, and failure to follow up concerns. Lord Laming stressed that safeguarding must be underpinned by vigilance, accountability, and inter-agency coordination (Laming, 2003).

While recognising the importance of child protection is necessary, Ferguson (2019) cautions against relying too heavily on rigid indicators. He emphasises that child protection should be rooted in empathetic, relationship-based practices. Using checklist approaches can lead to oversimplification and may overlook significant situational factors. Similarly, Leigh (2019) and Taylor et al. (2021) highlight that systemic

pressures such as high caseloads, fear of blame, and organisational culture can hinder practitioners' ability to identify harm or take effective action.

Recognition of abuse must take place within a supportive environment that emphasises reflective practice and supervision. National guidelines, such as *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (Department for Education, 2023), emphasise that simply recognising abuse is not enough; it must be accompanied by appropriate actions, multi-agency collaboration, and timely sharing of information. In summary, while recognising abuse is a critical first step, it must be integrated with professional judgment, emotional intelligence, and systemic support to be truly effective (Jones and Smith, 2020).

Once concerns are identified, it is crucial to record them accurately and objectively. Detailed records help detect patterns of harm over time and ensure information is preserved during transitions between services. Leigh (2019) warns of the dangers of poor documentation, particularly in high-pressure environments where assumptions may replace evidence. The NSPCC (2020) advises that records should be factual, up-to-date, and free from personal opinions, supporting effective communication between agencies and aiding investigations (Patel and Green, 2022).

Timely and appropriate reporting activates safeguarding procedures promptly, whereas delays can significantly increase risks to individuals. According to *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (Department for Education, 2023), all professionals must immediately report any concerns to a designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or relevant authority. Pengelly (2019) highlights that even experienced staff may hesitate to act due to fear of being wrong; however, safeguarding is about addressing risks rather than seeking absolute certainty.

The principle of referring involves directing concerns to appropriate services, such as children's social care or the police, to ensure protective measures beyond the practitioner's scope. Davies and Ward (2018) emphasise the importance of timely and effective referrals as part of a multi-agency response. Both the Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 highlight the need for collaboration among agencies in safeguarding and promoting welfare (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022).

Practitioners must be aware of their responsibilities within safeguarding frameworks. Safeguarding is a collective duty that extends beyond designated leads or social workers. Munro (2011) points out that organisational culture can sometimes create confusion about who is responsible for acting. Leigh (2019) emphasises the importance of clear communication and continuous supervision to improve professional confidence and decision-making. The Care Act 2014 reiterates that everyone working with adults at risk shares the responsibility to prevent harm and promote well-being (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022).

These five principles, recognising, recording, reporting, referring, and understanding responsibilities, create a system of accountability and care. When effectively implemented, they reduce the likelihood of harm being overlooked and ensure that safeguarding is viewed not as a one-time action but as an ongoing commitment (Munro, 2011; Laming, 2003; Department for Education, 2023).

2. References

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