

Part 2Case Study 1

Joanna is a 4-year old girl who has recently started in your reception class. As a teaching assistant you have built a good relationship with her and found her to be a happy, outgoing, confident and independent young girl. However, over recent weeks, you have seen a change in her behaviour. She has been quiet, clingy and reluctant to leave your side. She is also reluctant to take her jumper or cardigan off even though it is very warm weather. This morning, when she reached across you for some glue, you noticed some bruising on her body, near her ribs. When you asked Joanna about the bruises she got upset and didn't say anything.

A

As is pointed out in the National minimum standards (NMS) Part 20 all practitioners, no matter what their roles are who are working with children, have a responsibility in recognizing the signs and indicators that a child is at risk of harm or being abused. The outcome for the safeguarding standard is that children are safeguarded from any form of abuse and parents and staff are confident with the settings policy and procedures and the steps that are taken to safeguarding children (WG 2023 A) Following safeguarding policies and procedures that inform how to respond effectively with safeguarding concerns about the child (Early Years Alliance 2019) As is outlined in part one of the Children Act 1989 that children's welfare is of uppermost importance (Children Act 2024) this is also highlighted in the United Nations Conventions on the rights of the Child(UNCRC) article 19 the government must do all it can to make sure that children are protected from any form of abuse and bad treatment by their parent or anyone else who looks after them(UNICEF no Date) Early years settings provide a safe environment that the children can develop and thrive in with early years practitioners building positive relationships with each child and their family. As is shown in this case study, the teaching assistant has built a good relationship with Joanna and the importance of this is highlighted in the Help for Early Years Providers Department for Education (2022A). Early years practitioners forming a close ongoing relationship with children is important for the child's holistic development needs and wellbeing. As pointed out in Hobart and Frankel (2009) unless there are physical signs of abuse, the early years practitioners would not always recognise the child needs safeguarding. By having a good relationship and knowing children well in the early years setting the practitioner will be able to notice and observe any change in behaviour that may be a safeguarding concern. Recognising the signs of abuse for example as it stated in the case study Joanna has an unexplained

change in her behaviour and she is withdrawn and deciding to wear clothes that are covering her body to cover the bruise. According to NSPCC (2024 A) these are some of the usual signs of a child being mistreated. Also, reinforced by HM Government (2015) guidance for Early Years practitioners on recognising and responding appropriately to possible signs of abuse.

Practitioners need to be observant as the teaching assistant has been in the scenario. The next step that should be taken is questioning behaviours that indicate that a child may be at risk of harm and abuse. Signs may not always be apparent children might not disclose or understand what is happening to them or even may fear what might happen to them if they do or not know what is happening to them is abuse (NSPCC 2024 B). Therefore, any behaviour that seems unusual needs to be questioned. As the teaching assistant did in the case study she asked Joanna about the bruising on her body. When a child discloses that they are being abused the practitioner should be calm, open minded, listen carefully, ask questions to clarify what the child has said but not put words in their mouth by asking leading questions. Importantly, reassuring the child they have done the right thing to come to talk to the practitioner and that the practitioner will need to tell a senior member of the team the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) who has the responsibility to refer safeguarding concerns to social services or the police. The teaching assistant needs to record what was observed and how the child responded when asked about the bruising. As much detail as possible needs recording (Tusla no date). Adhering with the child protection policy that all practitioners need to follow in reporting abuse straight away and any disclosure that the child has made with a written confidential record according to the data protection act 2018 (GDPR) (Legislation gov.uk no date). The DSP would ask the parent about Joanna's bruising and ask if her behaviour has changed at home this would not be done if the safeguarding officer thought that this would place the child at further risk (MCCP 2019) the DSP would record the conversation and action that were taken regarding the concern and any background information, further observations or knowledge that the practitioner may have about the circumstances that might explain the safeguarding concern (sponsor refugees no date)

B

Legislation, policies, and procedures require reporting of safeguarding concerns, and ethical considerations are needed. When an early year's practitioner comes to reporting safeguarding concerns, the safeguarding procedures and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

framework need to be followed (HM Government 2023). The Children Act 2004 provides the legislative framework for child protection in Wales. The core principles involve the uppermost importance of the child's well-being and the expectations and requirements around duties of care to children. Practitioners must ensure that all recording and reporting is carried out ethically and prevents further risk of harm to children, families, and members of staff. (Save the Children, no date). It is important that details are factual, clear, and recorded accurately (Hughes and Owen 2009). In our area, the DSP must complete the Cysur—Mid & West Wales Multi-Agency Report Form, which is referred to as a MARF (Barking and Dagenham no date)

Once the reporting is made by phone the DSP must write a report within 24 hours to social services. If the DSP has made a written report first and not received notification from social services within 7 working days the DSP must contact social services. It is the DSP responsibility to record the outcome of any discussion held with the social services. In line with the locally agreed multi-agency reporting format. When the social services receive the written report form, they will investigate the concerns and discuss the concern with the police (Social Care Procedures 2020). This follows in line with the Social Services and the Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 which requires the reporting of safeguarding concerns and in early years settings the DSP must report these to the local authorities' Safeguarding hub (WG (B), 2021)

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) facilitates information sharing between services so children at risk can be identified as early as possible. It is a link between schools, GPs, the police, ambulance service and social care. The legal framework Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and the Department of Education (2013) support multi-agency information sharing concerns about safeguarding and the GDPR (2018) regulates all personal information connected to safeguarding has to be transparent, and shared securely and responsibly (HM Government, 2023) The DFE emphasises the importance of considering that by not sharing concerns could result in children being further harmed or at risk then they have to refer this information (Department for Education, 2015)

There is no justification for practitioners not to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities in reporting a child at risk of harm and abuse. Nonetheless, the practitioner's personal feelings may factor decision-making at this stage. This may include justifying the abusive behaviour because of being over friendly with family or carers and worried the report will lead to significantly upsetting the family or concerned persons or anxiety that the report will not be taken seriously. It is necessary that the practitioner reflects on the way in which these factors may influence decision making on not to report (WG (C) 2024) and that all practitioners know policies and procedures if they feel that DSP is not doing all that they can for the child that is at risk that they are aware of what they need to do (Department for Education, 2023).

The social services will decide on what action needs to be taken with all the relevant information considered. If no further action needs to be taken the DSP should give guidance to the child's family of support that is available. This corresponds with part 3 in the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2014 that assessing the need of individuals is the practitioner's responsibility for ensuring care and support (Legislation no date). If the practitioner is still concerned about the child, the DSP needs to be informed immediately and the concern brought straight to social services (Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2024).

If action needs to be taken all multi –agency professionals and the child's parent or guardian who can provide detailed information about the child and family will meet in a multi-agency meeting that is led by a senior social worker from Children's services. The meeting should be held in a local area where the child lives. The outcome of this meeting is to decide what action to take. If an early intervention needs to be in place this is a care plan that supports the child and families the aim of this is to put a stop to the situation from getting worse. It must say what action will be taken, who will take this and a timeframe on when this will be completed. This action needs to be child centred, and the family will be given a designated social worker to support the family. Another possible outcome would be voluntary accommodation if the child is found to be at risk of serious harm the social worker will decide the child can no longer be kept safe in their current home. This is a voluntary basis where the parent agrees that it is the best outcome for their child, or after the court has decided that it is the best outcome. The placement will be managed and overseen by the local authority. The last outcome might be that the child has a Child Protection plan professionals hear the views of the parent and include them in the decision- making about how best to support and protect the child (Cardiff University no date)

C

The early years settings main responsibility is safeguarding children and that children's welfare, and wellbeing is the uppermost important. Through creating a child-centred environment in which the children feel safe, respected and valued where the practitioner builds positive relationships with children and their families. Where the practitioners are vigilant to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow the settings procedures to make sure that the children have the support and protection that is needed (Little Owls 2020) It is a mandatory requirement that all early years settings ensure that practitioners and anyone who comes into contact with children are fully aware of the Wales safeguarding procedures and have a clear understanding of the

policies and procedures that the setting has put in place as is stated in Standard 20 of the NMS (WG(A) 2023) this is supported by Article 19 of the UNCRC stating the government must do all that they can to ensure that children are protected from any forms of abuse, neglect and mis treatment by parents or anyone else(UNICEF no Date). It is also required that all practitioners have safeguarding level 2 training and are aware of any signs of any types of abuse or neglect. Each setting needs to have a DSL who is trained in advanced safeguarding level 3 (WG(A), 2023). It is good practice to have a deputy safeguarding lead so there is someone to report to immediately if the DSL is out of reach (Info Kingston and Richmond, 2024). All practitioners to have regular supervision and staff meetings that give the opportunity to raise any safeguarding concerns (WG (A),2023)

It is law that all early year's practitioners, volunteers and trustees are required to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check DBS that complies with the Welsh government guidelines. All reasonable safeguarding needs to be taken to avoid any unsuitable candidates that will have contact with children that may put children at risk (Children in Wales, 2024). This is in line with the Education Act 2002 that all action needs to be taken to safeguard children.

In conclusion, ensuring that children are safeguarded is crucial, and settings must comply with safeguarding legislation and local safeguarding boards and have policies and procedures in place that are known to all staff and volunteers. All settings must have a DSP who is level 3 trained, and all staff need up-to-date training to be vigilant to children's wellbeing and able to recognise signs of abuse. Records must be completed of any safeguarding concerns that are clear and accurate, detailing exactly what has been observed and heard, which must be shared with the DSP. The DSP must refer these using the MARF to the local authority safeguarding hub, which will investigate and assess the risk and support needed or safeguarding action required.

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