

Initial Child Protection Conference
(600-800 words each / 5 min. talking each)

Mia - Social Worker

This is an Initial Child Protection Conference. The purpose of the conference today is to convene as professionals to share information and to consider and discuss a child protection plan for 3-year-old Dylan and his 3-month-old sister Rosie (Bell, 2018) whilst simultaneously considering their well-being and developmental requirements (Bethell, *et al.*, 2017) to determine whether a child protection plan would be necessary. If multi-agency professionals fail to collaborate effectively communication between professionals will break down, resulting in a reduction of the quality of necessary support for the child (Firmin, 2020). It is crucial that we as professionals continue to collaborate openly and honestly to ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are met and that approaches are suitable for the specific needs of this family (Jahans-Baynton and Grealish, 2020). Accurate and effective sharing of information contributes to ensuring that the children's health and well-being are protected as well as processes and objectives being achieved, prioritising the safety needs of the children involved (Ball, *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, as Akagawa and Smith (2019) sustain it is essential that policies and procedures that are in place are robust.

As per section 3, part 2 of section 47 of the *Children Act 1989* and in accordance with the *Education Act 2002* this referral by Dylan's teacher Nerys Thomas and the school's Designated Safeguarding Officer Carys Goshawk who are here with us today, was responded to within 24 hours. This conference is being held on the 11th of July, 2024 where the section 47 enquiry of the *Children Act 1989* was made 6 working days ago on the 5th of July, 2024. Additionally, Lauren Pope, Dylan and Rosie's health visitor is present today, who has also exhibited concerns regarding the well-being of the children.

Let us proceed with Nerys, the lead practitioner in Dylan's classroom who initially reported concerns about Dylans' welfare.

Nerys - Practitioner

As the lead practitioner at the Flying start setting Dylan attends, I have been working with Dylan and his family for the last six months. His attendance during this time has been good, with only a small number of informed absences due to illness. About a month ago I began noticing Dylan attending sessions with dirty knees and hands, I spoke with mum about his personal hygiene. I understand that everyone has a different level of cleanliness and personal hygiene and was very considerate of the matter while having this discussion (Personal Hygiene, no date). I encouraged mum to ensure Dylan had a bath regularly as well as reminding Dylan about the importance of hand washing during his time in setting. However, Dylans cleanliness did not improve after the initial conversation, and he now attends sessions in dirty clothing daily.

While I have attempted to speak again with mum regarding Dylans dirty clothes and unkempt appearance, as well as offering a referral to our Early Help (No date) team, she has now become very evasive at drop off and collection times.

There have also been occasions when an unknown male has brought Dylan to sessions. This man usually smells strongly of alcohol but does not seem to be inebriated at these times.

Dylan seems very quiet and withdrawn when this person brings him and can become anxious during the session but can be seen relaxing slightly when seeing his mum collecting him.

I spoke to Carys, the designated safeguarding officer at our setting, she encouraged me to keep daily observations on the cleanliness of Dylan and his clothes, I also kept a record of who collected and dropped Dylan off, his manor and behaviour during sessions, as well as other observations, such as if there was the smell of alcohol at these times and whether Dylan had a drink and fruit with him for the sessions.

As is required by the Data Protection Act (2018) I have written these observations on the setting iPad, which is locked with a passcode and kept in the locked filing cabinet.

Dylan attends without fruit and water. At our setting we supply a healthy snack daily and Dylan has begun asking for seconds during snack time and drinking all of his milk, which he has not done before. Dylan often plays away from the other children and can be seen flinching if another child shouts or moves quickly when they are close to him. Following information from the NSPCC (2024), I recognise these as signs of neglect abuse.

As stated in article 19 and 27 of the UNCRC (1989), Dylan has the right to an adequate standard of living and to be protected from all forms of neglect and abuse.

After completing these observations over the week and following the *Safeguarding Framework 2023*, I had more concerns for Dylans wellbeing and the signs of his neglect, I raised these concerns once again with Carys, our designated safeguarding officer, who asked that I transfer my written observations to her as the evidence required for a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH, no date).

Carys – DSO

As the Safeguarding Officer in a school setting, my role is to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and their families as stated in the Education Act 2002 (Welsh Government, 2021). I am the primary point of contact regarding safeguarding concerns while documenting concerns raised by staff, students or others (Munro, 2011). My role is to assess the seriousness of all concerns and to take appropriate action (Daniel, Taylor and Scott, 2011). On the 5th of July 2024, early years practitioner Nerys Thomas raised concern for the welfare of Dylan and Rosie. I advised Nerys Thomas to keep a detailed and accurate record of all concerns, as stated in The Children Act 1989, Section 1 and subsequent updates, including the Children Act 2004 (legislation.gov, no date). Section 17 of this policy places a duty of care to local authorities to ensure the safeguarding and the importance of welfare for children.

Nerys Thomas documented that Dylan is now attending school while wearing dirty clothes, that his level of hygiene has deteriorated significantly and Dylan has arrived at school with an unknown male, who had a strong smell of alcohol. As per the Care Standards Act (2000) it is critical as the Safeguarding officer to document all observations made, this includes altered

behaviour and poor hygiene (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2019). All of the observations noted by the practitioner are in detail which include specific times, dates and descriptions of behaviour and appearance. Nerys Thomas stated that there were conversations with the child's mother however there were no changes at home explained. Horwath (2007) explains that parent involvement is vital and key workers must be vigilant while assessing the situation, this aligns with Section 2 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Safeguarding Guidance of Working Together to Safeguard People (Welsh Government, 2024). Concerns for both Dylan and Rosie have been observed, recorded and passed onto relevant agencies such as Lauren Pope, the health visitor and Mia Wiles – the families social worker. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that the children's needs are comprehensively addressed (Welsh Government, 2021) while having the support, knowledge and resources of each professional. As per the Children's Act 2004, my role as a Safeguarding Officer will help contribute an insight to the child's education while in the school setting along with protecting their emotional well-being as stated by Article 19 of the UNCRC (CYPSCS, no date). Article 19 is a cornerstone of the UNCRC's focus on children's rights and states that we must ensure the protection of all children from all forms of neglect, physical or mental violence and sexual abuse (Vaghri, et al, Page 36) and the importance of multi-agencies working together in order to help the families and children. As stated by Horwath (2007) when safeguarding children is approached as a shared responsibility, it ensures that more than one professional is responsible for the child and reduces oversight. Reder & Duncan (2004) are in agreeance with this by stating effective, regular communication between the safeguarding officer, health visitor and social worker can help ensure that all concerns are voiced to all involved and any necessary interventions can be put in place. In order to accomplish a safeguarding strategy which coincides with the Childrens Act 2004, as a safeguarding officer, I established a clear safeguarding policy (Morgan, 2016) and ensured a clear understanding of who and what information should be reported to (Social Care Wales, n.d) which also aligns with the safe keeping of records through the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018). Ensuring all information or instances made by myself or by Nerys Thomas were documented and shared to relevant authorities while contributing to local safeguarding children boards (Ofsted, 2011). While keeping with the importance of a child – centred approach, this is highlighted by Munro (2011) in which it is explained that the review or child protection emphasizes how the need for all professionals involved should use their judgement in protecting children, while maintaining the child centred approach. Featherstone, White & Morris (2014) further this by stating that a relationship-based practise and how important being supportive is while working with children and families. From the information that i have received and documented from Nerys Thomas, i agree that there is a cause for concern for Dylan and Rosie, all information that has been documented has been passed on to their social worker.

Lauren - Health Visitor

My role as health visitor is to conduct regular home visits to assess the health and development of children, I also observe their physical and emotional wellbeing throughout each visit. As stated by Crowley, et al (2013) the importance of home visits and building knowledge and relationships with families can help to understand when there are changes and concerns to raise from the home environment and the signs to spot to ensure children are cared for and protected. It is important that I look for any indicators at all visits for the safeguarding and protection of children. As per The Children

Act 1989 section 17 for the service of children in local areas, I am responsible for the education and support of parents for children's nutrition, hygiene and safety (Children's rights in Wales, no date). To support families in understanding child development and the importance of meeting children's health, whilst also meeting their physical and emotional needs. My role is to support the welfare of children to be cared for by their own families where possible as per The Children Act 1989 (Children's rights in Wales, no date). My role is to build relationships with families this allows me to understand individual's circumstances to support families and tailor my advice to their individual needs, (Briggs, 2020).

Whilst at the home of Dylan and Rosie I also have concerns over various safeguarding and child protection issues. I have observed both children that of which their nutritional values, personal hygiene and the hygiene of the home environment and the safety of the home environment have deteriorated drastically. The UNCRC article 27 states that parents responsible for a child are responsible for the secure and necessary living conditions of a child, (The UNCRC, no date). Rosie is not hitting milestones in which she was doing well in her development, the risk of hinderance in children's development and signs of this can restrict their holistic development, spotting these signs early and supporting the safety and wellbeing of children is the forefront of my role (NSPCC, 2024). I also have concerns over her nutrition and how her feeds are monitored. The personal hygiene of Rosie is unsatisfactory, Rosie's nappies are always full and soiled through to her already dirty clothes. There are dirty nappies around the home and the safety of the home has deteriorated drastically. This raises concern for not only Rosie's development but also Dylan's and their overall wellbeing. Raising my concerns with the relevant authorities and working closely to achieve the best outcomes for children is emphasised by Ferguson, Kelly, and Pink, (2022) therefor I have raised my concerns and reported them to the relevant authorities that being Mia Wiles from the social services as we health visitors work closely with them to operate a collaborative response for such issues (Social Care Wales, no date). The poor quality of the living conditions of the children is unsatisfactory and after evaluating the children's living conditions, I have found that they have poor sleeping conditions, I support that action needs to be taken with the best interest of the whole family. As stated by NSPCC (2024), treading carefully while asking questions, making suggestions, or trusting to advise and support can raise subjects in which others are not keen on taking points on board or being open to admit wrongdoings. I have tried to engage with mum to help understand the underlying causes of deterioration and provided support on what resources are available for families who are struggling and to ease the stress. I have found that at present it is difficult to gage in conversation with mum with regards to provide support as she is very vacant and no longer communicating well during visits. Ensuring all concerns are documented correctly and following correct procedures is vital to the safeguarding and protection of children and for the relevant information to be shared solely with the relevant authorities, (Fong, 2020). Following this and the conclusion of the meeting I will regularly monitor the progress and ensure that the children are protected and that the children's needs are being met and improved while also monitoring their development.

Mia - Social Worker

As the appointed social worker on this case following the referral made by Dylan's teacher and designated safeguarding officer I visited the home environment within 24 hours, in keeping with the *Care Standards Act 2000* legislation. This coincides with the Victoria Climbié Inquiry (Laming, 2003)

which highlights the necessity of ensuring safer and more vigorous procedures under the *Children Act 2004*. Upon observation, I immediately recognised that the living standards of the home living environment were of poor quality, where basic hygiene requirements were not met attributable to an abundance of dirty nappies, animal faeces, mildewed food, exposed electrical wires, and lack of appropriate sleeping conditions within the premises. Consequently, these conditions disregard the criteria of physiological needs in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as asserted by Ozguner and Ozguner (2014) and disregards the *Human Rights Act 1998* along with Article 17 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, no date) where adults are obligated to protect children from abuse, harm, and neglect. Foundational physiological needs are imperative in order for children to develop physically, cognitively, and emotionally which according to Max-Neef (2017) if these basic requirements are not met it can therefore have adverse effects on social development and emotional stability, consequentially, Cicchetti and Valentino (2015) and Holt-Lunstad (2018) agree that an inability to develop meaningful and healthy relationships has an impacts children's wellbeing.

According to Zeanah and Humphreys (2018), these living conditions manifest that abuse is present, as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs shows that neglect can impact children on reaching self-actualisation as a result of the deprivation of nutritious foods, safe shelter, and adequate sleeping arrangements which can be categorised into the fundamental physiological needs compartments of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Bowen, 2021). Subsequently, abuse is a purposeful act in which a person causes harm or distress (Brattfjell and Flåm, 2019).

After careful consideration of the living conditions and home life with the well-being and development of the children being paramount (de Onis, 2017), and following the suspicions of significant harm which have breached the threshold of section 3, part 1 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019 (Social Care Wales, no date) that Dylan's teacher Nerys has identified we have decided to draw up a child protection plan for Dylan and Rosie. We will convene again in 2 weeks' time on the 25th of July, 2024 to decide on the next steps forward in supporting the children with conferences continuing until the children are no longer at risk of significant harm accordant with the *Children Act 1989*.

Reflection

Nerys

As Lead practitioner at my setting, I was aware of safeguarding procedures and the policy which we follow. I recognised some signs of abuse and neglect and knew to who and what I had to report in the case of a safeguarding issue. I understood that confidentiality is important and that speaking to the parents about sensitive issues was a must in these situations, even though some may make you uncomfortable. During the past month I have become the Designated Safeguarding Person at my setting and have received additional training for this role. Hearing and reading course notes for this subject I found I couldn't understand some aspects of the role, however, having the chance to roleplay this situation I feel has helped me to further understand what needs to be done and how a safeguarding meeting will be conducted.

I feel I understand more about safeguarding now that we have had the chance to further research and enact this scenario. I hope to use this new acquired knowledge in my new role as Designated safeguarding person.

Carys

As i am currently employed in a school setting, my understanding of safeguarding procedures is adequate. I understand where or who i must go to if given information from staff or children that may present concerning information or show a change in behaviour. If a child or multiple children show signs of changed behaviour, I understand that the Designated Safeguarding Officers of the school must be made aware, and all information is to be noted and kept confidential.

After completing this assignment, I have learnt that passing on information quickly and accurately is the correct pathway to take, as stated by the Children Act 2004. I have learnt the importance of communication between not only the parents/ caregivers but within the multi-agency workers. I have also learnt the importance of how the smallest change in a child's behaviour can have a profound effect on not only their strive for education but also their mental well-being.

Furthermore, I will be using the improved knowledge i have gained through researching the teamwork of mulit-agency workers and highlighting the importance of observation. Signs of changed behaviour could be the early signs of abuse or neglect, early intervention could help prevent these issues from escalating. A multi-disciplinary approach could help ensure all aspects of the child's well-being are considered and the safeguarding policies are actively contributing to the safety of children in my care.

Mia

Prior to this module, my comprehension of safeguarding procedures was of satisfactory understanding. I had basic knowledge of legislation that is foundational to safeguarding procedures, such as the *Care Standards Act 2000* which ensures that professionals are capable in their duty of care. Where I am employed, I am aware of the multiple Designated Safeguarding Officers at the setting and the protocols and procedures necessary to undertake presuming a child approaches me with information that has cause for concern, and which members of staff to inform upon receiving this information. As a result of the primary school where I am employed providing safeguarding courses annually, I am informed of where and whom to seek advice if I become aware or personally observe the unusual or changed behaviour of a child.

Following the completion of this module on safeguarding protocols, legislation underpinning safeguarding procedures such as the *Education Act 2002*, the *Children Act 2004* and the importance of collaboration between the multi-disciplinary team. I have been informed of the correct method in which to record a concern, where it is crucial to document the exact words given by the child alternatively to recounting the discussion using mature phrasing in order to accurately disclose the information to the Designated Safeguarding Officers. I have additionally been prepared to personally take concerns further to appropriate services if Designated Safeguarding Officers were to abstain from conducting their responsibility to record concerns and notify the appropriate agencies.

Subsequently, I have acquired knowledge of the duties of the multi-disciplinary team, where professionals are required to collaborate effectively during Initial Child Protection Conferences concerning the progress of an inquiry by Designated Safeguarding Officers and professionals' involvement in determining the appropriate outcome of the concern made, whilst concurrently being apprised of the situation of the family with the well-being of children being of utmost significance. Taking into consideration the familial circumstances of children, it is vital that practitioners carefully consider the best method in approaching parents and guardians when a concern arises, along with collaborating with multi-disciplinary agencies to provide the appropriate support and services necessary in order to assist families with maintaining a healthy lifestyle and caring for the well-being of children.

Lauren

Prior to this module my knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and child protection was appropriate for the role that I currently hold in the nursery class of a primary school. I understand the importance of noting concerns and raising them with the designated staff, always remaining professional, being aware of changes or concerns, my responsibility to the child, and my knowledge on how best to support. I am also aware of my responsibility of following procedures and keeping relevant information safe and confidential.

I have obtained knowledge in many legislations, safeguarding procedures, and child protection, along with acknowledgement in which authorities handle each protocol in various scenarios throughout this module. Legislations such as Children Act 1989, UNCRC, The Human Rights Act 1998, GDPR 2018, Children's Commissioner for Wales Act 2001, and Children Act 2004 are just a few that have surprised me in time frame of when these legislations came into place as many of these should have been for many years prior.

Following the studies and research we have learn not only during this module but also over the past year on this course I understand the importance of my role as a care provider for the children who attend our settings and the influence that we as practitioners can have on their development and safety. The UNCRC is something I am pleased to have read and learnt, going through all articles and understanding them in more detail and helping children understand their rights. Always learning new things and open to challenges and overcoming them. I have learnt that gaining the best knowledge on how to support children and following procedures to each detail is how we can be the best for the future generations.

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