Introduction

To safeguard vulnerable people and guarantee their safety and wellbeing, safeguarding is necessary. According to Care Inspectorate Wales (2023) safeguarding principles that prioritise safety, well-being and rights, entail being vigilant in resolving concerns and implementing efficient procedures to create a secure environment. Furthermore, if children feel safe, comfortable and taken care of by someone they can trust, they flourish. Safeguarding preserves human rights, fosters equality, decency and respect in society and cultivates trust (Little Jo's Day Nursery, 2015).

Recognising and recording safeguarding concerns

Child abuse occurs when a child is harmed by someone, which can be displayed by physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. Children who are victims of abuse may find it difficult to voice their experiences (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Learning (NSPCC) Learning, 2020b). Therefore, any individual who works with children and their families, need to be on alert for any indications of child abuse. Anyone who has worries about a child's safety or wellbeing could report them to the relevant authorities so that they may investigate them and take appropriate action (Arts Council of Wales, 2022). The practitioners involved with Joanne would be obliged to report the concerns to ensure her protection. Additionally, Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2024a) and Department for Educations (2023b) claims that abuse and neglect can be detrimental to children which can have lasting effects throughout their adult lives. Therefore, providing an earlier involvement can offer the children protection from experiencing maltreatment, preventing problems from occurring, mitigating safeguarding issues and interventions as well as long lasting advantages for children's health and wellbeing. Within the setting all caregivers have the responsibility to give Joanne a safe environment for their education.

According to South Gloucestershire Children's (2024) warning signs can be displayed differently by each child, therefore caregivers could gain awareness of warning signs early on to react to the concerns promptly. Joanne displayed warning signs by hesitating to remove her jumper in warm weather and being quiet and

disengaged with others. Moreover, Welsh Government (2022) suggest that the initial recognition and response is helpful to support the needs of the children through preventing or delaying situations which could result in the intervention of social services, which incorporates identifying adverse childhood experiences as well as solutions to mitigate them. To properly protect and secure Joanne, the practitioner could recognise and report disturbing situations as soon as possible using, ‘my concern' approach. Also, The Safeguarding Company (2024) indicates that ‘my concern’ website provides anyone accountable for safeguarding children at risk while managing as well as recording all safeguarding and welfare difficulties. In addition, it helps defend vulnerable children by enabling a timely intervention.

Fowler (2022) claims that maintaining confidentiality, security and the safety of children and other vulnerable people all depend on efficient record-keeping. For reliability, it is necessary to precisely record concerns using the Factual, Analysis, Children's voice, Timely and Share framework. Problem analysis aids in understanding the importance and possible implications of difficulties and timely logging enables rapid resolution. It is necessary to summarise the issue from the child's point of view and in their own words. Following organisational procedures when reporting concerns to the assigned safeguarding lead guarantees appropriate support and intervention. The practitioner would be required to accurately record any concerns that are relevant and to ensure that the information recorded on Joanne is factual and appropriate to ensure continuous protection. Moreover, if the abuser is a trusted person, children may be reluctant to report abuse, which can cause emotional problems like self-blame, guilt or confusion. Any sort of abuse can be indicated by symptoms in children, such as aggression, clinginess, anxiety, dissatisfaction or withdrawal. When a child exhibits symptoms of distress, adults could be able to identify them and ask appropriate questions to find out potential reasons (NSPCC Learning, 2020b). Joanne's actions and physical cues suggested that she may have been abused or neglected. It is essential to remember that victims of abuse sometimes find it difficult to express their circumstances. Children such as Joanne may notify adults to abuse by exhibiting symptoms, acting out or speaking subtly (Allnock and Miller, 2013 and Cossar *et al.*, 2013 cited in NSPCC learning, 2023a).

Reporting and referring safeguarding concerns

If a child is in danger, information could be shared without agreement with authorities or professionals. Practitioners need to quickly become acquainted with the safeguarding rules of the school. This includes understanding who oversees child safety and what to do if abuse is reported (NSPCC Learning, 2023a). To ensure Joanne's safety, the practitioner could report any safety concerns to the relevant agencies, who could then investigate and take any required measures, particularly if there are any signs of bruises. Furthermore, Welsh Government (2018) states clear lines of communication between the local government and its partners are necessary for effective reporting and communication in accordance with the Children Act of 2014. This process can be made more efficient by giving each organisation a single point of contact. All concerns regarding the welfare of a children could be recorded in writing, as could the responses. Any statements made by the child could be carefully noted to correspond with their communication style and information could be accurately recorded, differentiating between opinions and facts. The practitioner could follow the policies and report any change to Joanne’s behaviour.

While maintaining confidentiality is a top priority, early childhood educators may have to divulge private information to protect a child. Concerns about child safety require referrals to senior personnel or line supervisors (City and Guilds, WJEC and CBAC, 2019b). The safeguarding lead would need to share information with multiple agencies to protect Joanne, ensuring all documents are securely signed, dated and stored confidentially. Electronic files could be password-protected for security NSPCC learning (2023a). Furthermore, practitioners could build trusting relationships with families to give children high-quality care and education while maintaining their privacy. The programme seeks to guarantee that data shared between parents and carers is used exclusively to improve the welfare of children, adhering to legal record-keeping and data protection processes in line with the *Data Protection Act 2018* and the *Human Rights Act 1998* (Yeovil Opportunity Group, no date).

Local governments are mandated by law to aid children in groups within their authority. The setting would be obliged to raise the concerns of Joanne by acting upon Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 which requires authorities to investigate

whether to act if there is a reason to suspect danger or harm to a child (HM Government, 2023). Furthermore, ensuring the safety of children within educational environments requires strict adherence to laws, rules and safeguarding protocols. To protect children, every setting needs to be informed of the requirements for local safeguarding. Concerns regarding the welfare of children could be reported to a designated safeguarding contact at the local authority. To guarantee staff awareness, schools and institutions are required to delegate a Designated Safeguarding Person. Safeguarding children is the settings duty, and the local government plays role fostering productive cooperation, offering resources, training and supervising the execution of policies in schools (Welsh Government, 2020).

According to NSPCC learning (2024) and Wales Safeguarding Procedure (2024c) Some personnel are not well-versed in safeguarding practices and are reluctant to act because of insufficient details or lack of evidence, delayed reporting permission or discomfort in unusual situations. Sensitive information sharing can cause anxiety and organisational actions may be insufficient; cover-ups of abuse and deficiencies in child safety protocols have been documented.

NSPCC Learning (2019) suggests that providing care and support to the child reveal their feelings with the early years practitioner and offering the child the practitioners full attention by being mindful of body language. The practitioner would be required to document relevant information on Joanne by being considerate and understanding while reassuring Joanne’s emotions are significant. Whilst showing signs of respect by listening openly to understand. Demonstrating understanding by being engrossed in what is said. Moreover, emphasising the value of paying attention and sharing knowledge without interrupting or raising questions. Also, it is advisable to not pledge to keep the information secret instead, prioritise well-being and notify those who require access to the information. If possible, write down precise statements in notes. If at all feasible, disclose any concerns that arise right away to the supervisor or the child protection team (City and Guilds, WJEC and CBAC, 2019a). Therefore, documentation is necessary for any observation, child remark, overheard conversation, hearsay or uncertainty that might give rise to a safeguarding issue (Warwickshire Safeguarding, 2019).

Responsibilities of the setting

It is the duty of educators and early childhood care providers to keep a careful eye on children and take appropriate measures to safeguard their health, safety, and wellbeing (City and Guilds, WJEC and CBAC, 2019c). Therefore, the early years practitioner could ensure their approach to safeguarding is child centred to best support Joanne's interests (Department for Education, 2023a). Moreover, the Wales Safeguarding Procedures ensures that practitioners and others in charge are aware of their tasks and responsibilities. This follows the legal requirements and standards of collaboration to Safeguard People 2023 framework and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (Wales Safeguarding Procedures, 2024b).

It is necessary to have safeguarding policies established with guidelines and practices, to make sure volunteers as well as staff are trained to spot and report abuse (NSPCC learning, 2023b). Additionally, children deserve to be protected against maltreatment of any kind, to be listened to and to be treated with respect. Practitioners could be trained to identify and act upon indications of abuse, like Joanne's situation, following policies to protect children from harm. Practitioners need to be aware of their responsibilities, sensitive to children's problems, discreet and capable of handling situations both inside and outside of the classroom (Little Jo's Day Nursery, 2015). A lead person could be selected for child safety and safeguarding in every organisation that deals with children (NSPCC learning, 2020a).

A global agreement known as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 19 highlights responsivities of practitioners to ensure that Joanne has access to defence against abuse, neglect and violence. To improve children's capacity to exercise their rights, practitioners could give equitable chances, pay attention to what they have to say and take responsibility for actions that have an impact on them (Welsh Government, 2020). Subsequently, implementing a Children's Rights Approach entails making sure leaders and employees are knowledgeable and holding decision-makers accountable to children for their influence on children's life. (UNCRC) requires all staff members to complete specific training on children's rights depending on their positions and environments. To establish an effective children's rights approach, it also places a strong emphasis on working with outside organisations and incorporating children's rights into decision-

making at all levels (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2017). Also, safety and wellbeing concerning children like Joanne could be placed first in life decisions and to work together to support them and their family which are key components of a centralised approach (Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton Safeguarding Procedures, 2024).

When making decisions that affect children, it is appropriate for adults to consult with the children. When selecting a decision, adults could examine the viewpoints of the children. It is necessary to support Joanne to express herself in the most comfortable form (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, 2024).

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) oversees the statutory programme for background checks on individuals who deal with adults, families and children. This system evaluates applicants for employment and keeps a record of those who are not allowed to engage with children or adults in a certain capacity (National Health Service [NHS], 2019). The setting has a fundamental role to offer everyone has a (DBS) to provide a safe place for the children.

It is the responsibility of practitioners to safeguard children and advance their welfare by using a child centred approach (Department for Education, 2023a). Furthermore, City and Guides, WJEC and CBAC (2019d) to prioritise the rights of the child as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is relevant for adopting a child centred approach for protection. Involving concentrating on the child's individual needs and interests, while also, building trusting bonds with the family or other carers, actively listening to the child and valuing and showing respect. Childcare providers can establish strong connections with parents and carers by establishing a foundation of trust and respect, which could provide a secure and nurturing environment for the children.

Conclusion

In summary, safeguarding is necessary to ensure the security and welfare of those who are susceptible to harm, particularly children like Joanne. Identifying warning indicators, filing reports of concerns and adhering to protocols to protect children from maltreatment and neglect. Practitioners could prioritise child centred approaches, cultivate trust with families and be mindful of their duties. Creating a

secure and caring environment where children can flourish by putting policies and procedures into place, offering training and encouraging a culture of safeguarding.

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