

Reflection

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This case study about Cian played a major role in my development as a child practitioner, particularly in emphasizing how critical our safeguarding responsibilities are. One of the most memorable moments was when an unfamiliar adult, who smelled strongly of alcohol, approached Cian. I immediately noticed that Cian looked visibly upset. When I gently asked what was wrong, he told me he didn't feel safe. Hearing that from a young child really emphasized the level of trust he had in us, and I knew I needed to report it right away. This was an important moment, transforming my concern from a general worry into a clear safeguarding issue. I promptly followed our safeguarding procedures and reported the incident to the safeguarding officer.

I initially became concerned when I noticed changes in Cian's appearance and behaviour. He started attending the school in messy clothes and seemed more withdrawn and less responsive than before. This was especially noticeable because he had previously been confident and expressive. His sudden mood swings and withdrawal prompted me to watch him more closely and to keep detailed notes on my observations. Taking this organized approach helped me better understand what he might have been experiencing. While I felt confident in my ability to identify and respond to the situation, I also took some time to reflect on whether I might have missed earlier warning signs or could have acted sooner. These feelings are a natural part of the emotional challenges that come with safeguarding work. They are a reminder that continuous reflection is key for professional growth. Regular self-assessment helps us improve our approach and ensures we provide the best support for the children in our care.

Working collaboratively with other professionals was essential in Cian's case. The health visitor played a crucial role by assessing Cian's health and development, and checking on his younger sibling, who was under one. Their involvement allowed us to consider the possibility of postnatal depression in the mother and evaluate

whether alcohol misuse was affecting the household. These broader family issues demonstrated that Cian's situation was part of a larger safeguarding concern, not an isolated case. This process really emphasized the importance of effective multi-agency collaboration. Safeguarding a child is not something any single professional can handle on their own. By partnering with the health visitor, social workers, and internal colleagues, we were able to share information smoothly and respond rapidly. Throughout, Cian remained at the core of our efforts

Being part of a committed team reassured me and proved how well-coordinated, timely multi-agency work can make a real difference in safeguarding children and achieving positive outcomes.

Although I was initially hesitant, I chose to prioritize the child's safety because the evidence was clear. Talking through the situation with the safeguarding officer helped me feel more confident in following the proper procedures. However, getting the parent involved was quite challenging, which made it difficult to get a full picture of the child's home environment. This case showed that acting early is crucial, as abuse signs are not always clear. It made me think of (Maslow's theory 1943) that children need basic safety and security before they can grow. I also considered Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) that a child's environment shapes their development; here, an unstable home was key.

In summary, this experience really enhanced my understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, especially emphasizing the importance of truly hearing what the child has to say. It reminded me how valuable collaborative working and ongoing reflection are. Most importantly, it reaffirmed that putting the child's best interests first should always be the priority, even when it means asking tough questions or making difficult decisions.

References (reflection):

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press.

Maslow, A. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation - Abraham H Maslow - Psychological Review Vol 50 No 4 July 1943. www.academia.edu, [online] 50(4). Available at: https://www.academia.edu/9415670/A_Theory_of_Human_Motivation_Abraham_H_Maslow_Psychological_Review_Vol_50_No_4_July_1943.