Reflective paper

After undertaking the Initial Child Protection Conference, the importance of working as a team and liaising with multi-agencies was outlined and I now feel more aware of its importance within practice. By doing this, both Every Child Matters (2003) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) state that it ensures the safeguarding, wellbeing and needs of children are met (Welsh Government, 2011). Here, links can be made to legislative frameworks that I was not previously aware of, such as All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008. I have discovered that this document outlines some of basic professional practices, including the importance of communicating with other professionals, confidentiality and keeping records and assessments that are accurate, concise and clear (Children in Wales, 2008). Therefore, I now feel more aware of the importance of following this document within my practice in protecting and safeguarding children.

Moyles (2006) says that early identification of safeguarding issues allows children and families to be provided with support as soon as a problem emerges, and this support can help in the prevention of any further issues arising. Brotherton et al. (2010) states that local agencies must work together to identify children and families in need. Similarly, through research, I have discovered that under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote multiagency working, to try to improve the safety and welfare of all children. Therefore, this research has made it clearer to me that there is a need for all professionals to work and communicate together, follow procedures appropriately and under Article 3 of the UNCRC, they must work towards what is best of each child, thus promoting the safety and wellbeing of all children (Welsh Government, 2011).

This knowledge and understanding of the importance of working and liaising as a team, and following legislative framework, has helped me develop as a professional in terms of working in the early years and with young children as I now know that by doing this, it can allow for links to be made in regard to children's wellbeing. For example, Lord Laming's report made a number of recommendations following the death of Victoria Climbié, to improve the child welfare system in place in the UK. Subsequently, the Green Paper, Every Child Matters, was released in line with its' legal frame the Children Act 2004 shortly after (Laming, 2003). Therefore, as a practitioner, looking at these frameworks and policies, I now feel that it is clear that there has been a significant shift in thinking and looking at children's services in the UK and therefore where there are concerns about a child's welfare, we must take appropriate action

in order to address these concerns by working under local policies, procedures and in partnership with multiagencies (Department of Health, 2002).

Before undertaking research into safeguarding procedures, I did not have much knowledge on what the All Wales Child Protection Procedure 2008 was, but I now feel that I have a better understanding of it and its use within settings. For example, I now know that within settings, it can be used as a guide and inform child protection practice. It also gives details to help determine how individual child protection referrals, plans and actions are put into place and undertaken (Children in Wales, 2014). Therefore, I now feel more confident that I can look at this document and refer to it within my setting when necessary.

After research, I am more aware of following appropriate procedures and the importance of doing so. For example, after looking at procedures, such as All Wales Child Protection Procedures, and having a closer look at my settings procedures, I now know that following these will ensure that children are able to grow and develop in a safe environment with effective care and I will now take action by carefully following these procedures to allow children to have the best outcomes. By following this good practice, NSPCC Learning (2018) believes that it not only protects children from abuse but prevents harm to children's health and development.

The process of undertaking the case study has allowed me to develop my knowledge and skills of the correct procedures in terms of referring children to Child Protection Plans, as well as local Safeguarding referral boards. It has also allowed me to see what roles other professionals play within the referral process and what I can do as a practitioner to support them. For example, as a practitioner I will now ensure that I am more accurate with any recording and reporting of a safeguarding matter by ensuring that everything that I witness or that a child says to me is written down accurately and then reported to the appropriate person.

According to Aubrey (2007) this information sharing, assessing and record keeping, can then help within follow up reviews within conferences. It also allows us as professionals to provide information to other professionals, such as a Health Visitor or Social Worker, with a more detailed insights into any concerns and needs that children may have. Therefore, I am now more aware that it is my responsibility to help to identify and report children who may be being abused. I also now have a better understanding of some of the physical or behavioural signs of abuse to look out for and that this information can then be used to feedback to the Child

Protection Officer within the setting and appropriate multiagencies, such as a Social Worker, for it to then be used within a Case Conference or within Core meetings (Murphy, 1995).

I now understand that a referral can be made by anyone that has concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing and it can come from the child themselves (Appleton and Peckover, 2015). As professionals, we have a responsibility to refer a child under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, if there are any concerns, such as if they have suffered significant harm or are likely to (Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board, no date).Within my own practice, these concerns would be reported immediately to the Child Protection Officer within the setting for them to make the referral if necessary.

Looking at legislation and child protections systems in Wales and the UK, both have their own laws and child protection systems to help protect and safeguard children. After researching both, I am now aware that each also has guidance, practice and a framework of legislation to recognise children who are at risk of harm and both take action to protect these children from further abuse that could occur. According to NSPCC Learning (2018) they both also have a responsibility for their own policies and laws in regard to safeguarding children and their guidance states what settings should do to help keep children safe. Although, their systems and frameworks are slightly different, I have discovered that they are based on similar principles.

Although both Wales and the UK are very similar regarding safeguarding legislation and procedures, after further research I have discovered that Wales have other measures in place that are not in the UK which I will now consider within practice. Some of these include not only the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008, but the Children's Commissioner Act 2001, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and ESTYN (Children in Wales, 2014). So, looking at these, I now understand that they are more specific to Wales. Therefore, within my future practice, I will look at and refer to these rather than just looking at legislation in the UK as a whole.

After undertaking research into abuse and looking at legislation and statutory procedures, it has helped me have a better understanding of the meaning of abuse. I previously referred to abuse under the categories of physical, sexual, emotional and neglect and I was not aware of any other categories before undertaking research. After doing so, it has allowed me to discover that there are other forms of abuse that have arisen over more recent years. Some of which include, according to NSPCC (2018) online abuse and child sexual exploitation. Penna (2005:146)

states that 'as a consequence of this extension of harms, child protection has come to mean the protection of children from failing to achieve their potential'. Therefore, I now feel that I have a better understanding of the different types of abuse and I am more aware of what signs to look out for within practice.

Linking to the forms of abuse, this has opened my eyes to the consequences of this evolving change and these increasing forms of abuse, meaning that policies and legislative frameworks are changing more frequently. For example, as a result of new abuse cases and aspects, such as technology and the media increasingly growing, there are now more legislation and policies that are getting updated more regularly. Some recent examples include, the Data Protection Act 2018, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018, Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in School and College 2018, and also the Children Act 2006 which has now been amended in 2018 (High Speed Training, 2018). I now feel more aware that there is continuous change to policies and legislative frameworks in order to ensure the safeguarding of all children. Therefore, I will now ensure that I look at up to date, relevant legislation and ensure that I am aware of any changes.

When understanding children and their needs, I am now aware of what Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) are and the effects that these might have on children if they do not get the correct support and intervention. Appleton and Peckover (2015) say that experiencing childhood maltreatment contributes to adult health problems. Similarly, Public Health Wales (2018:1) states that 'evidence shows that children who experience stressful and poor-quality childhoods are more likely to develop health-harming and anti-social behaviours'. Also, children are more likely to have poor performance in school and be involved in crime.

Therefore, I now feel that I have enough understanding of the effects that ACE's have on children that I feel confident to express the importance of providing the appropriate intervention and support to my fellow colleagues within future practice if I feel that support is necessary for a child, and in turn, will help to minimise the chances of them developing health, development or social issues in later life (Appleton and Peckover, 2015).

Through my role as a Social Worker, it allowed me to better understand the role and how their involvement within children's lives can have an impact on improving their safety and wellbeing. For example, I discovered that the role involves regularly visiting children and their parents or carer to assess their situation. Also, working with a range of other professionals to

provide support and advice for families and providing information to other professionals in, for example, Case Conferences. (Children's Social Work Matters, 2018).

The case conference that was undertaken allowed each member of the group to state their concerns and anything that they had witnessed regarding the child. Some of the concerns mentioned within the conference, others were more aware of and had information regarding it. For example, the Key Worker had seen a man come to the setting to pick up the child and did not know who he was. Therefore, the Social Worker, who was aware that it was the mother's new partner, was able to say how he was linked to the child. This has allowed me to consider having better communication and checking consent forms for children within my own future professional practice and the impact that this could have on children and families in supporting and safeguarding them. For example, if the man was on the child's consent from, the Key Worker would have known whether he was consented to pick up the child.

Looking at consent policies and documents and their importance within settings, I have discovered that, as a practitioner, I must only allow consented adults to pick up a child and I now understand how important it is to ensure that this information is up to date. According to Hunt (2014:1) 'the failure to keep adequate records was a major criticism by Lord Laming in the Victoria Climbié Inquiry review'. Therefore, this emphasises that all information about children, their needs and any information regarding who has access and consent to pick children up, should be on file and up to date. After considering this, I now realise the importance that this has within practice and within my future practice, I will ensure that this information is obtained from all children, referred to when necessary and updated regularly.

To conclude, from further research into child protection, undertaking a case study and looking at legislation and statutory procedures, it has allowed me to better understand and be more confident about child protection procedures, the signs to look out for when identifying children in need and the importance that my role as a practitioner has on the safeguarding of children. For example, I now feel more confident about sharing information with other professionals and its importance within practice.

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