



**GRADUATE CERTIFICATE in Consolidation
of Social Work Practice
LEVEL 6 - 60 Credits
BMPPF6044**

**LEARNER PORTFOLIO
(PORTH AGORED and UNIVERSITY OF WALES
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Task 3

Safeguarding and working in complex situations – Case Study

Guidance;

Please ensure that you meet the National Occupational Standards and assigned Learning Outcomes for this task (see appendix 5 and 6 of the handbook).

Question:

Complete a critically reflective case study based on an assessment that you have undertaken with others, in your own area of work, concerning the safeguarding of either an adult or a child. You must demonstrate how the case relates to or could relate to safeguarding legislation, policies, strategies and procedures (including demonstrating an understanding of the interface between social services provision in Wales with the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU) and outside the EU). You must demonstrate your understanding of the integration of analysis in assessment, collaborative working and professional judgements in increasingly complex situations and the use of social work theories. You must refer to the specific dimensions of working in Wales.

4000 words (+/- 10%: include your actual word count at the end of each section).

In Wales “the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is the legal framework that brings together social services law and places duties on local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers to promote the well-being of children and adults in need of care and support and their carers” (Welsh Government, 2015). Part 7 of the Act is safeguarding which sets out the definition of children and adults at risk of abuse and neglect. Section 126(1) of the Act sets out the definition of an adult at risk which is:

- 1. “Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect.*
- 2. Has needs for care and support (whether the LA is meeting those needs), and*
- 3. As a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it”.*

One of the principles of the Act as set out in the guidance and the Corporate Safeguarding Policy is that ‘safeguarding is everyone’s business’, and everyone now has a duty to report any safeguarding concerns. The principles throughout the Act is about including the community to take a shared responsibility from supporting one another, to providing care to reporting, and to move away from the culture of ‘it’s got nothing to do with me’. The statutory safeguarding guidance Working Together to Safeguard People sets out the codes of Safeguarding Practice for individuals, groups, and organisations offering activities or services to children and adults in Wales to safeguard children and adults to make sure nobody is put at risk of harm (Welsh Government, 2016).

As a social worker working in Wales I work in line with the Social Services and well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and I am aware that if I was to work in England I would need to work in line with The Care Act 2014. I also work in line with other legislations and even though I do not work directly with children I am aware of the Children Act 1989. Not only would I be working under different legislation in England, but I would also need to be working in line with the codes of professional practice for social works set out by the General Social Care Council (SCIE, SCC 2010). The Codes of Professional Practice for Social Care in Wales are set out by Social Care Wales (SCW, 2019). In Wales the Wales Safeguarding Procedures for children and adults at risk of neglect sets out guidance for practitioners on how to apply the legislation and sets out our responsibilities. As I work with adults over the age of 65 my case study will be about an adult at risk and the safeguarding procedures applied to this.

Mrs 2 is an adult who lives in a property on her own in a market town in XXX Wales. The start of the process has already began before the case is allocated to myself as the safeguarding concern was reported by Mrs 2's daughter to the safeguarding team in the local authority. Within the local authority all safeguarding reports are sent to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) who then make decisions whether the reported concerns are to be investigated further under s126. It is then allocated to a social worker to investigate the reported concerns and to report back to MASH. The first thing I do is to prepare by reading through the file to familiarise myself with who are the individuals involved and what are the concerns reported. Siobhan Maclean (2015) discusses that there are various models we as social workers can use, and when working in safeguarding we are able to look at a process model or component model. When working I would consider the component model as there are specific tasks I need to do however, they may not always follow a linear process as each case is different. However, what I always start with is the preparation process of reading and making contact with the individual or their family to arrange a visit.

As part of the preparation stage when talking with the individual I will assess whether the individual has capacity to make decision or whether they need someone to support them which could be their Power of Attorney, family member or an advocate. Mrs 2 has capacity, but I still asked whether she would prefer for anyone to be present with her during the visit to support or whether she felt she required an advocate with the importance of advocacy set out in section 145 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 (Welsh Government, 2016). One of the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is about individuals having voice and control when discussing their own outcomes as part of the assessment process with the individual being at the centre of the assessment with the same principle being applied in safeguarding. When undertaking assessment the principles of the act also integrates the social work values of the code of professional practice in section 3 of promoting well-being, voice and control. Therefore person centred practice is important in social work practice to be able to implement the principles of law and codes of practice. Lawson (2013) discusses Carl Rogers' work of person centred theory which was based around counselling however can be applied to social work as he discusses the importance of the individual and the workers' relationship being able to build trust and empower the individual as they know the issues that affect them and their own strengths. As a social worker how I would build trust and empower individuals would be to as set out section 5 of the codes of professional practice of showing respect and acting with integrity (SCW, 2019).

Multi-agency work may be required if other services are involved such as Health or the Police, which is important in terms of information sharing. Some of these services are described as 'relevant parties' under section 162(4) of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. The importance of information sharing and multi-agency work is highlighted by Adult Practice Reviews of lessons to be learnt as conducted by the Adult Practice Review for the North Wales Safeguarding Board (NWSB 2023). However, despite the importance of multi-agency work as set out the current legislation there are other barriers that may present themselves when working together. Littlewood describes older people as being 'major consumers' of health and social care and may often have complex needs therefore the need to work together this therefore highlights the need to work towards improving the quality and experience of services. The challenges that can present themselves when partnership working is that the two services are working from two different models, with health working from the medical model and social care working from social model (Morris, 2008). The medical model focusing on the 'impairment' with the professional being the expert with an emphasis on labelling the individual. While the social model looks at the larger picture of the 'problem' being of socio-economic reasons, it is more inclusive and looks at the individual as the expert in what's best for them (Maclean and Harrison, 2015). Therefore, this highlights the impotence of multi-agency work of professionals working together to have all of the relevant information when undertaking a holistic assessment. In this case study there was no involvement with health only the Police in the MASH team however the family were involved with her daughter as her main carer.

When conducting an investigation under section 126 I will look at the models for assessment I believe that the questioning model forms part of my preparation work as I note down the points to remind myself of what Information I need to gather during the intervention. The procedural model and the exchange model are all relevant when undertaking safeguarding investigations as there is specific information we need to ascertain from the individual when assessing risk (Samle et al.,1993). However, I don't want it to feel that I am just asking questions as though it is a type of interview but rather it is a conversation with the individual at the centre. Using the exchange model within the assessment process works in line with the codes of professional practice of prompting the well-being, voice and control of the individual and carers while supporting them to stay safe (SCW, 2019).

One of the dilemmas in safeguarding can be when a social worker does not have the time to build a relationship with an individual, if they are not known to them previously before conducting the Section 126. This is due to there being timescales of having to complete the assessment within 7 working days of receiving the referral, with the assessment informing the decision making process. This goes against Rogers' theory of person centred practice when he discusses the importance of the individual and the worker relationship to build trust (Lawson, 2013). However, when I undertake the visit I took the time to discuss with Mrs 2 her family history to come to understand her culture and identity. Mrs 2 was not born in the United Kingdom, but had immigrated to the country after marrying therefore she did not identify as being British which was important as her identity. Mrs 2 was not Welsh speaking however under the Welsh language measures (Wales) 2011 the Active offer was made and refused by her as not required. A further conflict in safeguarding is language and due to the time

timescales within safeguarding there may not be a social worker who is available in the language of choice. This can pose many barriers in terms of communication and how the assessment is conducted as the individual may not understand the language or terminology used and does not promote anti-oppressive practice (Dominelli, 2002).

I had a conversation with Mrs 2 and wrote down what happened in her words and discussed risks and how we could put safeguards in place. During the conversation it was confirmed that the safeguarding concern was one of financial abuse with the alleged perpetrator being a family friend. The definition of 'abuse' and 'neglect' are set out in section 197(1) of the Act with abuse can be "physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse" (XXSB, 2023). The XX Safeguarding Board set out that "*financial abuse is the abuse or misuse of a person's money, property or resources in a position of, or expectation of, trust to a vulnerable person*" [hereafter XXSB] (2023). The Older People's Commissioner for Wales works towards protecting Older People's rights and working towards ending discrimination. As part of the Commissioner's mission statement, is to undertake research to evidence the scale of abuse and what services are required as preventative measures and to support older people who are victims of abuse [hereafter Older People Commissioner for Wales] (2023). Abuse and financial abuse suffered by older people in Wales is described as being 'a hidden problem' as older people are unable to access services or are not reporting the abuse. The Stats Wales collated figures from all the local authorities in Wales from 2018 to 2019, which are the latest figures. They recorded a total of 3,097 of reported cases of financial abuse in Wales, this was then broken down to age categories, with 1,311 reported cases from 18-65 and 1,786 for 65 and over. The highest number of reported cases for financial abuse was for Women over the age of 65. Looking at all of the categories of abuse for over the age of 65 neglect had the highest reported number of cases (Welsh Government, 2023).

Mrs 2 was aware what had taken place and understood why her daughter had made a safeguarding referral. Mrs 2 discussed what had taken place and had capacity under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to make decisions under the safeguarding process. Mrs 2 was clear in her reasoning and stated she did not want the matter to be investigated by the Police as it would cause her further upset and her wish was to be able to move forward. The family felt angry and wished the police to investigate further however, respected Mrs 2 decision as it was her right to make this decision even if they thought it was an unwise decision. Not only is it promoting the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, but it is also about promoting anti oppressive and discriminatory practice, to respect Mrs 2's rights as an older person as set out in the United Nations principles for Older Persons (United Nations Human Rights 1991). As part of the Section 126 I spoke with the family and discussed with the daughter who is Mrs 2 main carer her concerns and how they wishes to be supported and whether she would benefit from having a carers assessment as set out in part 3 of the codes of practice of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

The assessment process itself can be called an intervention in its own right with Hardy emphasising the importance of the need to look at strengths based assessment to empower the individual and to look at other areas of support (Hardy, 2017). In this case study when discussing the safeguarding incident I believe that it empowered Mrs 2 to move forward from being a victim of financial abuse to taking back control on how she wished to move forward

under safeguarding promoting person centred practice. Through further discussion Mrs 2 identified that as she has some memory impairment, it was important to her to be supported by her family, specifically her daughter. When speaking to her daughter she confirmed that they had taken action to put safeguards in place, which in itself was a strength based approach. However, as a social worker I need to be aware that many individuals who have care and support needs may not have supportive families and may in fact be befriended or abused by those closest to them (Chisnell and Kelly, 2019). These individuals could be refusing support due to coercive behaviour and being socially excluded by the perpetrator, with individuals with disabilities being at higher risk of suffering abuse (Ward, 2008).

Therefore, this highlight the importance of multi-agency work of sharing information as part of an assessment process in order for us to be able to make decisions in complex situations (Chisnell and Kelly, 2019). As a social worker who has not long been qualified the use of supervision and discussions with colleagues is also important where I can reflect on cases and to exercise Schon's theory of reflection on action (Thompson, 2015). During these discussions it gave me the confidence to 'dig a bit deeper' when asking questions during safeguarding investigations to try and get a better understanding of the individuals circumstances and as Siobhan MacIen says to have that "professional curiosity" (2015).

During this case study safeguards were put in place with the support of the family and therefore no further involvement was required by social services, as Mrs 2 needs were being met safely by the family. However, in other cases there will be times when there will be a need for social service to remain involved and a safeguarding care and support plan will be put in place. I would work in a way to try and empower the individual to work in partnership to look at what is important to them. Bailey (et al 2018) discuss the term 'social resilience' in older people that they have had a lot of life experience and knowledge and in the current socio-economic climate of limited resources the need to look at this 'social resilience'. In the chapter Bailey went on to look at the issue not just in the UK but on a global scale as the World Health Organisation sets out statistics that it is predicted that '*by 2030 1 in 6 adults in the world will be over the age of 60*' and that the increase is also seen in countries with "low- and middle-income" (WHO, 2023). Looking at the figures this could suggest that with a growing older population that this will put pressure on social care and health services to provide support. However, as Bailey (et al 2018) discussed this can be seen as a positive as this cohort of group of people can be seen as providing extra resources within families to support one another. However, the important factor as discussed by the WHO is 'health' and the need for all individuals to lead happy and healthy lives.

In Wales, the Future of Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is in place with the importance of preventative work being in place with seven wellbeing goals for public services to implement these within their services (future generations Wales, 2023). In order to achieve some of these goals the local authority now has wellbeing teams and community navigators to be able to support individuals to look at different groups and activities in their areas to increase social interaction and improve health and wellbeing. When working with individuals I discuss their level of social interaction in the community and this will form part of the assessment to be able to identify any needs and I will then signpost or make referrals on their behalf. One of the disadvantages of the location of the market town in a rural area of Wales is the limited number

of activities and groups available in the local community for individuals. Also the issue of transport in the area as there are limited services available increasing social isolation and the risks this brings (Milbourn, 2011). Which is important for individuals and communities to provide their feedback on services and say what is important to them when creating services.

The Working Together to safeguard people Volume 1 sets in section 21 that there is a duty for local authorities under section 6 of the Human Rights Act that are also in line with the European Convention of Human Rights from article 2 to 8 (Welsh Government, 2016). The right to respect a private life, family and home which as a social worker we promote this in line with the section 4 of the codes of practice where we work with individuals to balance rights, responsibilities and risks (SCW, 2023). The issue of risk is one that needs to be discussed with the individual in order to assess their capacity around risks in order to safeguard to try and minimise risks and put in place preventative measures (Chisnell and Kelly 2019). When discussing the section 126 with the safeguarding lead in MASH I reported my findings and discussed with them the next steps which in this case the lead social worker in MASH liaised with the police. In some cases a strategy meeting would be held bringing together all of the professionals involved to discuss the safeguarding concerns raised and a safeguarding plan would be put in place. When taking a multi-agency approach we can at times come across differences of opinion when discussing risk as some professionals may be more risk averse than others and discussion will need to take place about the threshold for risk management and balancing the rights of the individual (Hothersall and Maas-Lowit, 2010). In this case study there was no other professional involvement other than those in MASH however in previous cases I have had discussions with other professionals where there has been a conflict of opinion as at times there can be a culture clash within services as professionals can be working towards different agendas. These conflicts of opinion can be resolved through co-working with other professionals and it is about respecting one another and their views and having a professional discussions on how to move towards to provide a good service for individuals and their carers'. When assessing risk as part of section 126 enquiries I use my knowledge, skills and experience as a social worker and will evidence the reason for decision making (Hothersall and Maas-Lowit, 2010). Therefore, the need to be accountable for the quality of my work as set out in section 6 of the codes of professional practice of maintaining clear and accurate records of case notes and when completing assessments and how they are recorded and stored complying with data protection law The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

Reflecting back over the last 12 months I feel that I have gained confidence in my own practice in many areas of social work. I have been able to work with individuals in complex situations and been able to undertake assessments to manage risk. I feel I have built a good professional relationships with other professionals in other services and being accountable for my work when multi-agency working. Having experience now I believe I am now able to apply Schon's theory of reflection in action as well as reflection on action (Thompson, 2015). When reflecting in action I think about how I am presenting myself to the individual and consider my communication skills and consider 'what worked well last time'. Even though not all cases are the same however having a skill set and accessing these skills when required. Whether that is using negotiation skills when working with individuals where there are a lot of risks, but who may be reluctant to engage. Working with other professionals also provides me with the

opportunity to reflect in action. To learn from others when observing good practice whether that is communications skills or reading reports of high standard, I will consider incorporating these skills into my own practice. Utilising my supervision is important as I use this time to reflect on my cases and about my own practice of how I approached certain dilemmas and how to move forward and I am then able to identify my learning needs. In terms of safeguarding I feel that I would benefit from undertaking further Section 126 enquiries and being able to see the whole process through as I feel this would enhance my skills and confidence further.

Word count – 3,670