

Gemma Williams 2312455

Carolanne Kerr 2307327

Michelle Jarrett 2125271

Sarah James 2311424

Prynhawn da a croeso to the initial child protection conference. Let us begin by saying that HM Government (2018) says that everyone has the responsibility to safeguard and protect children and that a child centered approach should be at the forefront to promote the wellbeing to safeguard every child. Family Rights Group (2023) describes an Initial Child Protection Conference as a process where relevant information regarding a child is gathered from the professionals surrounding the child.

I would like to start by introducing myself, I am Gemma Williams Social worker of Peter and his family, please could we have a short introduction of our names and roles.

Hi, I am Carolanne Kerr, and I am the head teacher at St Trinity School of Wales.

Department of Education (2020) the role of a head teacher is the health, welfare, safety and inclusion of all pupils, addressing any concerns of safety myself and colleagues may have, ensuring the welfare of the pupils are met and implementing safeguarding following the legislation guide. UNICEF (N.D) believes that everyone has a duty of care to all children, and all concerns should be reported, and a safeguarding form should be fulfilled to their best ability.

Hi, I am Sarah James, and I am a local authority foster carer. I have been involved with the family since the birth of Peter when he first came into my care with his mum Jude.

My role as a foster carer is to ensure that the children in my care and families I help to support have guidance, love and support to help them build a more positive future. The most important part of my role is ensuring I safeguard everyone, particularly the children who are the most vulnerable and at risk of significant harm. This is in line with the Social Services and wellbeing (Wales) act 2014. In following this act, it allows me to give children a voice, to allow them to feel heard and understood. This act puts children who are vulnerable at the centre of their care. This enables a more positive and manageable care plan with the child's opinions added. This is also stated as part of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 3, the best interests of the child in all aspects the child must be at the centre of all approaches.

Hello, my name is Michelle Jarrett, I am the health visitor for Jude and her 2 children Peter and Molly. Thank you for letting me share the information I have on the family. My role as a Health Visitor according to the Welsh Government (2012) is to focus on early identification and intervention of the needs of families with children aged 0-5 in the local community. The Centre for Early Childhood (2023) worked alongside the Princess of Wales to produce a report to highlight the importance and the breadth of the role of the Health Visitor in the early years. We are trained to identify families that may require clinical and professional support and can help set up support plans. These plans can be long term or short-term dependent on needs and progression made. UNICEF (1989) rights of the child shape my role and ensures that the rights of the child are being met with my role as a health visitor playing particular attention to Article 6 survival and development, Article 24 Health and Health services and Article 27 An adequate standard of living.

Diolch! Thank you all for attending today. The Munro Report (Munro, 2011) says that to create a child protection system that is responsive to children's welfare, professionals such as yourselves are vital to protect our children, ensuring that we have an accurate understanding of the child's life. In line with General Data Protection regulator the Safeguarding board of Wales (n.d.) say that personal information must be stored and kept for a period of time depending on what the data is used for.

Today we are going to discuss Peter who is a three-year-old child. Peter and his sister Molly, 10 months old, live with their mum Jude, a younger parent who has had alcohol issues. Peter was put on a joint care order with social services and following that, he was placed in foster care with yourself, Sarah James – Can I confirm that is correct Sarah?

Recently there have been concerns over the children's wellbeing.

An invitation was sent to Jude, Peter's mum, but this was declined due to Gary, Jude's new partner, being unable to attend. Gary was not requested to be present due to Jude's support worker feeling that he would make Jude feel uncomfortable and not be forthcoming to share information (Darby 2020). Darby (2020) and Family Rights Group (2023) also state that children are invited to an initial case conference, but on this occasion, Peter is too young to fully understand.

By the end of this conference, we need to deem if the children are safe and not in an immediate danger, whether both children need to be on a child protection plan or to place them on the register and then we need to make a date for the next meeting (Family Rights Group 2023).

Please can we start with you, Mrs Kerr!

Caz

Peter started afternoon nursery in September, at first peter's attendance was good, he would be dressed smartly and clean, he would come in happy with a smile, and who engaged with his peers. Recently his keyworker noted that Peter was regularly coming into nursery late or would often miss a day, he had become withdrawn from his peers, arriving in unkept clothes and coming in hungry and often seen taking snacks of other children. UNICEF (N.D) upholds article 19 of the United Nations conventions on the rights of the Child, that all children have the right to be protected, nurtured and free from any forms of abuse wherever they may live, no matter their circumstances.

It has also come to our attention that Peter has been brought to nursery by an unknown male, staff and parents have commented that this male smells of alcohol. When we contacted mum, she was reluctant to tell us who the male was, but we have recently found out that this is mums new partner Gary. Following the guidance from Government Wales (2021) section 28 of the children's Act 2004 is to safeguard and protect the welfare of the child, along with Vale of Glamorgan (N.D) local authority guidance using multi-agency referral form (MARF) we asked for section 47 to be implemented under The Children's Act 1989 (HM Government 2023)

Section 4 of the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, says allowing Peter to voice his concerns, lets him know his voice is being heard about situations that affect him (Education Act 2002 Welsh Government 2022). When we spoke to Peter about how things are at home, Peter said there is no food at home and that mum does not have money to buy food and that mum has Gary over and they drink a lot, Peter does not like it when his mum has had a drink. All notes taken comply with the Data Protection and the General Data Protection regulation Gov. Wales (2018)

Dewis Cymru (2023) says the role of the attendance officer is to keep a school attendance register and liaise with parents and offer support. In this case our school attendance officer contacted mum Jude regarding Peters attendance and to enquire about the male who has dropped off and picked up Peter. This caused a concern as we know mum is already known to social services and had an alcohol problem previously and that Peter has a younger sister Molly who is 10 months old. Mrs Williams, can you confirm that social services have been involved with the family.

Public Health Wales (2023a) says to safeguard children is to protect them from any forms of abuse or miss treatment and to prevent harm to the children's development and health, and that children should be able to grow up in a safe environment. Furthermore, NSPCC (2024) says that a good

setting is one that has an up-to-date safeguarding policy and procedures in place, and following the procedures means that children are kept safe from those that may pose a risk.

Our concern is Peter is suffering neglect, according to NSPCC (2020) neglect is when a child's basic needs like being hungry, poor hygiene and wearing dirty clothes for example Peter has often come to nursery hungry and wearing dirty clothes, this can leave a long-term effect on their physical and mental wellbeing. Additionally, Barnardo's (2024) says withholding basic resources, love and care is a form of neglect, and this can have an impact on the child's health and wellbeing and can impact on their life.

We are also concerned for mum Jude's welfare as we believe she may have relapsed and is dependent on alcohol again. Under the Social Services Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, improving the well-being for those that need help and support and working in partnership with other agencies to help Jude, Peter and Molly become a healthy, happy family (Legislation Government UK 2014).

This leads to concern of Emotional abuse of Peter seeing their mum Jude drinking. According to NSPCC (2022) emotional abuse can be hard to spot, there are many types of emotional abuse, like a parent being absent or being exposed to upsetting situations like alcohol. Emotional abuse and neglect over long periods of time can affect the child's social, emotional, physical health and development.

Adverse childhood Experiences (ACEs) can cause direct harm and indirect harm (Hughes *et al* 2017) in Peter case we believe he is suffering from ACEs due to emotional abuse, neglect and alcohol misuse within the home with concerns the affect it can leave on their well-being Public Health Wales (2023b).

From all the information we have gathered, we would recommend that Peter go on the child protection order under the social emotional and well-being explained by Safeguarding Wales (2024) with assessments to be followed up.

As a school we are keen to work with the team involved with Jude. To ensure Jude receives fair and equal treatment, it is essential to comply with the principles outlined in the Equality Act 2010, this legislation protects Jude from any discrimination (Legislation Gov UK 2010)

Thank you Mrs Kerr, please can we hear from you next, Michelle.

I became involved with the family when Jude was pregnant with Peter. There were early concerns that Peter would be born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). The National Health Service (NHS) (2023) explains this disorder as when the mother drinks alcohol it gets passed to the baby through the placenta, the baby is not able to process the alcohol so well which can lead to developmental problems in the womb for the brain and the body. Research carried out by GOV.UK (2021) shows that the rate of FASD in Wales has increased by about 27% since 2010, primarily believed to be because of training and awareness. Because of the level of concern, Jude was placed in a mother and baby placement under a joint care order. Gemma, can you confirm that this did happen please?

After Peter was born Jude showed real signs of improvement and then accessed respite care, Sarah, can you confirm this is ongoing?

Jude was advised by our service to bottle feed Peter due to the alcohol concerns and this is supported by Joseph and Pearl (2018) who discuss the benefits of a baby being bottle fed. Following the advice from my team Jude claimed the Welsh Government Scheme, Healthy Start which provides a pre-paid card that allows Jude to buy formula and other healthy foods and vitamins(Gov.Wales 2022) In communications with Jude's General Practitioner (GP). This information was shared following the guidelines of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from NHS digital (2022). It was confirmed that Peter was brought in for additional appointments to check on development following the concern of FASD and confirmed currently Peter shows no signs of FASD currently. The GP also confirmed that both children are up to date on their vaccinations and done in a timely manner and at the last appointment 7 weeks ago there were no concerns raised.

When I visited the family home it was in good order, clean, tidy and organised and Jude was doing well at meeting her parental responsibilities, as described by The Children's Act (1989) the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority that a parent will have concerning their children. It encompasses all the actions and decisions necessary for the care, welfare, and development of the child. This is supported more recently by the NSPCC (2024) and provides signposting opportunities for Jude to upskill her parenting.

In recent weeks I have seen a decline in clinic attendance and have been less responsive when we have tried to attempt to arrange a home visit. When I went to the house last week for an unscheduled visit it was noted the standard of living had decreased dramatically. When I asked Jude how things had been for her more recently, she said that things had been fine, but Molly was going through a stage of not sleeping, waking Peter up and not going back to bed, but she was fine. On this visit neither child was fully dressed, Molly was in a full nappy, NHS 111 (2023) supports the use of nappies but it does provide guidelines on the reasons why they should be changed regularly and the issues that can come from allowing a child to wear a dirty nappy, Molly was only wearing a vest and that was saturated from dribble and was partially grubby. Peter was significantly quieter than I have seen him on past visits, previously he would show me what he would show me something he was proud of. Peter was wearing pants and a T shirt, which was grubby, Mrs Kerr, is this in line with what you have observed? Jude was very reluctant to discuss why the property was not of its normal standard and why the children were not dressed. When asked why Jude had not attended any of the clinics over the past few weeks, Jude said she was busy. I suggested that Jude tackles one room a day in the house and that she approaches Peter's setting to see if he could change to a morning session to allow them to get a routine in place for when he starts school, this was also going to allow Jude to attend a mother and baby group with

Molly , which according to Action for Children(2023) will support cognitive, emotional and physical development , and allow Jude to access support and mix with mums in the local community. When I checked before coming to this meeting Jude had not attended the recommended groups.

From the information that I have provided I recommend that Peter and Molly go on a child protection order under the category of neglect for social emotional and well-being, this is explained by Safeguarding Wales (2024) who recommend further assessments to protect the children from harm, I am keen for us to work together to reach a favorable outcome in the best interests of the family unit. Thank you for allowing me to share my findings and I hope that by working together we can get back to a happy and thriving family.

Gemma

As a social worker my role is to support individuals and their families, to protect them from harm and improve their lives (Action for me, 2018). McCarthy (2015), says that building a relationship with these families will help all involved, children will begin to trust and gain confidence to be more open and parents will be more likely to listen to advice and seek support.

The Children Acts of 1989 (GOV. uk 1989) and 2004 (HM Government, 2018) Section 47 was enforced by the authorities. There had been allegations of neglect and worries about the family and their living conditions. Based on these allegations I visited the family home. HM Government (2018) and Henke, Shepherd and O'callaghan. (n.d.) report that under section 47 of the Children Act, local authorities must be able to physically see the child and if not able to enter the home, an emergency protection order must be applied for. In this instance I was allowed access into the home and in my professional opinion the house was unkept, it was dirty, with washing up and dirty laundry, along with empty bottles of wine.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a child (UNCRC 2022), highlights within Article 24 the right for a child to live in a clean and safe environment, and in my opinion, this was not apparent here. On a positive note, I witnessed the relationship between Jude and her children was of a loving one, the children were seeking mum's attention in the way of cuddles and communication. As a professional I am aware of the Wales Safeguarding

Procedures (n.d.) where the child has a voice and the UNRCC article 12, also speaks of the child being at the centre of anything that concerns them.

I spoke with Peter, asking him about his home life and he stated that he did not like Gary, he said “he is mean to me, mummy and Molly”. As guided by NSPCC Learning (2024) they advise that when speaking to children, you must adjust your language to the child's understanding. Peter said that Mum and Gary often “shout at each other” and there are times when they must stay in their bedrooms, but they cry because they are hungry. Molly was still in her pajamas at the time of my visit, which was 11am, and her clothes were dirty, and the nappy was large and soiled. Peter would not leave his room. In my professional opinion the children are being neglected by mum. The Welsh Government (2014) say that neglect is when the needs of a child are not being met. The Social Services and wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 saw the needs of a child as being paramount (Welsh Government 2014). In this case both children on my visit were dirty, hungry and not living in a suitable environment, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Egersdorff, 2017) shows us that basic needs such as food are integral for a child to develop to their full potential.

Jude disclosed that she suffered neglect from poor parenting and lived in poverty as a child. Action for children (2024) says that living in poverty can lead to mental health issues in future life. Jude is an alcoholic and has received support from social services and other agencies for her dependency, and she was sober for 2 years. I also have concerns over the wellbeing and safety of Jude. Gary is a lot older than her, he is also an alcoholic, and she is showing signs of relapse, which will have an impact on the children. NSPCC (2022) report that children whose parent is dependent on a substance such as alcohol may have problems providing basic care, they further this by stating that this could cause the children to develop adverse childhood experiences. Liverpool CAMHS (2023) describes the impact on ACE’S as having long term effects on health, behavior issues and on a child’s learning.

Based on the reports from Jude’s drug and alcohol support worker, who is unable to attend, Jude is struggling, and they have reported there is a strain on Jude personal relationship with Gary. Social Care Wales (n.d) state that vulnerable adults such as Jude need support.

They believe that Jude is suffering emotional abuse from Gary. NHS (2022) describe emotional abuse as someone who is being controlled, belittled and isolates them from family and friends.

In my professional opinion both children are suffering from neglect, Peter was quiet, withdrawn and looked unhappy in his home environment and Molly is unkempt and it appears that her basic needs are being neglected.

Please can we hear off Sarah, Peter and Molly's foster carer.

As already stated by Gemma, Peter came into care initially with Jude as a mother and baby placement and has continued having consistent support from myself through respite two nights monthly, this is in line with the Social services and wellbeing act Wales 2014 which is centered around ensuring that children and young people are not at risk of harm or abuse of any kind.

In the time I have been involved with the family, I have seen positive progress, particularly in the early days as already discussed in previous meetings. However, more recently I have noticed a change not only in Peter's demeanor but also in his behaviours when in my care. When he is due to leave my care there is a noticeable difference in his behaviour and he shows an element of fear, not being happy or content when around his mum, which he has always been fine with previously. There is also a change in how Jude communicates with myself in the sense that she does not like to have discussions when I meet to collect the children, it is more of a quick drop off and leaves with minimal conversation. She has previously always been good at engaging with me. I supported Jude when she was first with me in attending regular medicals for Peter and on the odd occasion attended the support groups which were recommended by the Health Visitors. My attendance was to support Jude and help her build confidence in being in the community with Peter. This is following the guidance of the Social Services and wellbeing Wales act 2014, part 9 statutory guidance (partnership arrangements).

There has been a change in Peters appearance, both physically and in the way he is dressed. He is also very hungry when he comes. He has commented many times about how he is hungry and does not eat much at home as mummy does not have money to get him food. This correlates with what he has also told His early years setting, can you confirm this, Mrs Kerr?

These are areas of concern for me, especially as it appears Jude is not meeting the basic needs of Peter laid out in the UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) (article 27).

When collecting the children from mum, for respite I have noticed the smell of alcohol on her. These concerns along with those of Peters appearance I have flagged up with the children's social worker Gemma. I have also logged these in writing in line with Recording for Foster Carers the Local Authority fostering services Wales regulations 2018 regulation 37. These concerns also flag up areas of the UNCRC that don't appear to be being met by Jude, in particular article 19 protection from violence, abuse and neglect and again article 27 adequate standard of living. Article 27 states that children should have their basic needs met so they can grow and develop. Parents are responsible for this, but if they are struggling and need support, local authorities and governments can help support families.

I have seen the partner in the car when Jude drops the children off at our local meet up point. He has had minimal interaction with myself but he has not been forth coming in conversations.

I have met Peters little sister Molly a few times. She is usually asleep in the car so I have very minimal contact with her and only see her for seconds at a time. When I do see her, she is usually dressed in a baby grow.

I hope that as a team we are able to put a suitable plan in place to meet the needs of Jude, Peter and Molly. I am willing to support where needed. Thankyou.

Thank you all for the information provided today. I can summarize that we have concerns on both children's welfare, and I suggest we put them on a Care and Support Plan (CASP) The Care and Support (Care Planning) (Wales) Regulations 2015 (Legislation). Gov. UK). Do we all conquer with this plan?

We aim to keep the children together at home with support, from the team around the family, such as yourselves and outside agencies for support groups and this is in line with Article 9 UNCRC but this will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the needs of the children are being met.

I advise we increase the respite with Sarah for both children to one night a week to allow mum to attend suitable support groups for her alcohol issues. Is that agreeable with you Sarah?

Can I confirm the review conference will be in 3 months time in accordance to Darby (2020) who writes for London Borough of Redbridge Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Thank you all. We will now move on to the reflection.

Reflection time

Caz

At the beginning of this module, I felt I had a decent understanding of safeguarding. I was aware of how to report and record my concerns, and recognising the importance of listening to the child, allowing them to speak at their own pace without interruption or leading questions. It was clear to me that making sure their voice is heard is important. I also know who my designated safeguarding leads and the local authorities' safeguarding officer. However, my knowledge had gaps, particularly the legal frameworks and the types of safeguarding issues. For instance, I had heard of the Children's Act 1989 but did not fully understand the implications.

Throughout this module, I explored the various policies and procedures, gaining a clearer understanding of why they exist and how they are implemented. One piece of legislation I explored was the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which aims to improve well-being and provide support and care. This act, along with others, forms the foundations of safeguarding policies, ensuring that vulnerable individuals receive the help they need. I also expanded my knowledge of the different types of abuse beyond neglect, emotional, and physical abuse and I learned about more complex issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and sex trafficking. These forms of abuse are often harder to detect and require a subtle approach to safeguarding.

Additionally, I realize the importance of understanding that not all cases are the same. Each situation demands a tailored response, and recognizing the signs of various types of abuse, even the less obvious ones, is essential for effective safeguarding. Since completing this module, I have taken proactive steps to enhance my safeguarding practice. I have downloaded the safeguarding app, which provides quick access to important information and resources. I have also signed up for the weekly CASPAR newsletter emails from the NSPCC, ensuring I stay updated on the latest developments in safeguarding.

This module has given me confidence in dealing with safeguarding issues should they arise, and I now have a much deeper understanding of the policies and procedures and feel more prepared to speak up and act when necessary. Overall, the knowledge and skills I have gained will be invaluable in my personal and work journey to safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children.

Michelle

Before starting this module, I had a substantial understanding of safeguarding due to regular and comprehensive training provided by my setting. This training covered the four main types of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect, and issues like online grooming. The knowledge

and skills gained equipped me to identify signs of abuse and take appropriate actions, adhering to safeguarding policies and procedures.

This module has significantly developed my awareness and understanding of safeguarding practices. One aspect is the re-introduction of the Safeguarding app, which I have now re-downloaded. The app offers updates and the latest developments in safeguarding. Using this app will greatly contribute to my professional development and enable me to support colleagues who wish to develop their knowledge in safeguarding.

This module expanded my knowledge by providing an opportunity to explore policies beyond the school environment. This broader understanding helps me raise the level of care and support I offer to children and families. Sharing this information ensures my practices are up to date, raising the standard of safeguarding within my setting.

I now have a clearer understanding of what a case conference entails, including its structure and processes. Knowing what information is needed and how to present it will enable me to contribute more effectively. This supports my professional growth and ensures I am well-prepared to support the best interests of children and families in my setting.

The knowledge and skills gained from this module have reinforced my existing understanding and broadened my knowledge of safeguarding practices. I am confident this will allow me to make a difference in the lives of those I work with and contribute positively to the overall safeguarding efforts within my setting.

Gems

I have enjoyed this safeguarding module. This module has expanded my understanding, enriched my knowledge, and has given me new perspectives on the critical importance of safeguarding within our society. Like all practitioners who work with children I have had yearly training on the indicators of abuse, and I have also completed level 2 safeguarding due to my previous role as a childminder.

Before this module, I thought my understanding of safeguarding was quite good. I knew it was essential to protect vulnerable individuals, especially children, from abuse and neglect. My prior knowledge stemmed from general awareness and some basic training, which covered recognising signs of abuse and the responsibilities of professionals in safeguarding roles. I had a basic understanding of the need for reporting concerns to relevant authorities. However, my knowledge was lacking understanding of the legislative framework and the broader implications of safeguarding practices.

Reflecting on this module, has made me believe that I should have made a referral outside of the workplace a few years ago and voiced my concerns about a little boy. I have always

wondered about that child and although he wasn't in immediate danger, I feel that he was being neglected and that I should have said something as it was my legal obligation to do so. I realise how crucial it is for professionals to understand the legal framework that governs safeguarding. The laws and regulations not only provide guidelines for protecting children, but they also set the standards for accountability and responsibility. I was also unaware of the continuous changes and updates to laws within safeguarding and protecting children. This has inspired me to commit to ongoing learning and professional development to ensure that I am always equipped to contribute effectively to safeguarding efforts. I am not sure what career path I will take after this degree and I have always thought about a role within a safeguarding team, maybe within the police force or social services. I find this topic interesting and feel that I could really support children who need help.

Sarah

I have enjoyed this module and learnt a lot from it. As much as my previous experience of panel meetings and conferences through fostering have helped in parts of this assignment and given me a good base knowledge there was so much that I was not aware of. It has been a real insight into what to expect at an Initial Child Protection Conference and has allowed me to feel a little more confident if I ever need to attend one of these conference meetings in the future.

I have been on many safeguard training in my professional years and it is forever changing but one thing they tend not to cover is what to expect in these conference meetings. For me, this has been an excellent learning journey to gain more experience and understanding in the safeguard field.

On reflection, I have changed and updated my policies on safeguarding to include the various areas we have covered in this module. I feel I am now more equipped to move forward confidently caring for children and safeguarding them and those around them, especially those who are most vulnerable.

My knowledge on safeguarding lacked understanding of the legislations which underpin the core procedures and policies on safeguarding. Having read extensively all legislations and acts surrounding safeguarding I feel I am now more competent in my role as a childcare provider. I also feel more confident in going forward in my professional career if I choose to follow my dream of becoming a social worker for children and young people.

This draws a close to the end of our presentation, thank you for listening.

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