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Recognising and recording

As NSPCC (2024) describes, child abuse can take place in different forms such as sexual, physical, mental, or neglect. Children are extremely vulnerable as they are dependent on an adult or someone else to take care of them. As practitioners, it is our duty to recognise any signs or symptoms of abuse, whether they are minor or major concerns. As professionals we have a duty of care towards our children. Any kind of abuse leaves a scar on a child's life, affecting their overall development according to NSPCC (2024a). To be able to recognise these signs and symptoms, we as professionals must be trained or have the understanding to spot these signs of abuse whether it be sexual physical, mental, or neglect to protect our children in our care.

There are signs and symptoms that emotional abuse is going on in this case as Lucy is manipulated by the father to keep this a secret. Sometimes children who get abused by an adult are deceived either to get toys or sweets in return as a bribe to keep quiet or they have been told that it is a normal or good thing to do. We have seen cases of child sexual abuse which showed how a child was manipulated to do such actions. Then one of the first concerns we noticed was mum being quiet and dad tells the staff that Lucy is only 2 and is toilet trained which was suspicious or raises concerns of how a young child of this age is toilet trained. Sometimes children as young as Lucy are toilet trained due to cultural requirements or training in this matter which could come under minor signs of abuse but as guidelines in NSPCC (2024a) states that it does not matter if the concern is major or minor it needs to be addressed to social services or any other local children help services.

It is our duty as practitioners to safeguard children's welfare. Recognising signs of any kind of abuse is important, at this age the perpetrator could be a family member, or someone who is a close to the family such as extended family member or friend, who the guardians would trust to leave their child in their care if necessary. One of the big

issues is to record questioning techniques we face. Here in this case, we are not sure about the family circle of Lucy, so our assumptions automatically go to dad.

As a practitioner this may be done via observing the child or by asking several types of questions to the child, sometimes having a conversation with guardians can give us professionals some indicators. But in this case, we could not arrange time alone with mum as we have seen dad has controlling behaviour with mum as she is told to not say anything. But via our observation when Lucy went to use the toilet, we noticed Lucy crying, standing naked waste below, when we looked at Lucy she had discharge, and it was very red.

We can only save children from significant harm of sexual abuse once practitioners know of the signs. Often, a child is badly manipulated by a loved one, making it difficult for them to understand how harmful the situation is. This type of manipulation is known as child sexual exploitation, Advice for practitioner (DFE, 2015). In this case we can see signs of child sexual exploitation as the child is not willing to say what had happened between her and her dad but rather is manipulated by dad. As section 24 advice for practitioner (DFE, 2015) states the stages of recognising signs or knowing them is important. This case shows Lucy's parents were asked about this new changing behaviour that occurred since yesterday but as we have seen today the matter has become worse.

Accurate and factual recording is important and should be done in writing in 'my concerns form' or any other method to record as individual settings. We need to record information such as how it happened and keep our views and opinions out (NSPCC, 2024). As a result of identifying signs of child sexual abuse it is the practitioners' duty to report it to social services or local authorities such as police. Then it would be the police or social services job to address the issue and investigate it further or they take quicker action according to the worse situations like this case where signs of abuse are quite clear and child's overall health is compromised (DFE, 2015).

Reporting and referring

According to Ramaswarmi, S. et al (2023) in India reporting of child sexual abuse CSA is quite complicated as to report such events you will have to fill legal forms to start CSA cases, however they often do not get reported because of social pressure and many other barriers for families to report. Victims of sexual abuse families get pressured by people in their social circle. It is not an easy step for victims' families to start this process to report due to many barriers that are faced in India, for example, victims are normally looked down on rather than the abuser. Pietrantonio et al (2013) suggest that if CSA cases are reported properly, it could save more children from abuse in future and serve the victim with justice. Furthermore, Sege et al (2011) also agrees that not every case being reported results in more children targeted with this abuse. Bearing this problem in mind, new CSA law along with Protection of Children from Sexual Offense (POCSO) Act 2012 has emerged in India which is mainly for professionals, practitioners who are dealing with children or children are under their supervision. It is a duty to report any signs of child abuse, this must be reported to local authorities. Even though this law is for everyone, it becomes harder in India due to heavy cultural value. Family respect falls in between reporting such matters because it means defamation of the family name and it encourages them to solve matters within the family and not reporting it legally (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Once the case is legally reported, then it could be referred to the children mental health services. However, this can only be done when there are trained professionals who can recognise abuse as mentioned in Louwers et al (2012). Wekerle (2013) agrees to train the practitioners to detect signs of abuse and to report them (Ramaswarmi, S et al 2023).

Antwi, W.K. et al (2021) radiographers are known to look for the signs of abuse and further examining the physical symptoms they can find the underlying cause of the abuse. However, they are not reliable every time because in the past some Ghanaian radiographers could not declare the cause of abuse because the case was dealt by a different organisation rather than themselves. The reason mentioned in this study conducted by Antwi, W.K et al 2021 showed radiographers could not report due to not having enough knowledge or training on how or who to report the abuse to, so they can make the referral to the right place. They also argued that in Ghana some radiographers did not report the abuse even though clinically it was proven, they failed to report due to being fearful of another doctor or professional in charge. Lack of training was one of the

main reasons that showed. Reporting the case has an important impact on children's development. This study showed that radiographers were not able to report and this left children in more danger as it gave them no security and abusers had more chances to ruin more children's lives. The study showed that internal factors were the main reason stopping them reporting promptly and referring them to the right agencies. These internal factors included lack of training for safeguarding children from abuse, team working, also overload of work and not having enough time to deal with cases. One of the big reasons appeared to be that the staff did not have backing from the hospital's legal team (Antwi, W.K. et al 2021).

Sivis, Cetinkaya. R (2015) states that since reporting CSA cases become compulsory the rates of the cases have increased as it showed in Mathew (2015) where the Australian state of Victoria and between Ireland cases reported by 2010. The results showed that Australian state of Victoria had the highest number of cases reported due to compulsory following the legislation of CSA cases because at that time in Ireland the law was not compulsory. In Turkey the law to report CSA came in place in 2004 (item number 103, Turkish criminal law) which states that reporting any sexual abuse towards children under the age of 16 is must on everyone in line with (item number 278, Turkish criminal law). The law also applied to school counselors to report the CSA cases. School counselors allow the counselors to give reliable information to suitable authorities to report the case of an individual without seeking anyone's permission (Sivi's, Cetinkaya. R, 2015).

Nscpcc (2024b) In United Kingdom four nations have their own legislations to safeguard children. Our setting being in England follows the legislation for England. We follow the department for education for guidance on working with children 'working together to safeguard children (2023). The independent inquiry into child sexual abuse (IICSA) suggests that government should add these independent reports of children whether they have been reported by child or an adult or if practitioners suspect of sexual abuse should make it to legal duty to report it to the government. When in doubt like this case we contacted the NSPCC helpline to guide us further to support the child's welfare. NSPCC helpline is another support in place to refer the child into the right place. Next part is assessing the risk where they further check what level risk is involved. All assessments need to be completed within 45 days. If the assessments

suggest that there's risk of significant harm then help from the court is attained accordingly which involves immediate legal actions to safeguard children (NSPCC, 2024b).

Settings responsibilities

Practitioners are responsible for safeguarding children from any kind of abuse, as outlined in the guidelines. Adhering to these guidelines is essential for the effective protection of children. Settings are responsible for ensuring their staff receive thorough training on safeguarding children from harm. Every member of staff must follow Section 2.1 safeguarding information for all staff (DFE, 2023), which emphasises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The Children Act 1989 mandates that every staff member who works with children reads, understands, and promptly follows these guidelines. Ensuring that all staff are well-informed and compliant with these regulations is crucial for the safety and well-being of children.

Settings need to follow these guidelines according to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), Children act (2004), UNCRC (2010) to protect children from significant harm. Settings should ensure their staff are well-trained on how to report safeguarding matters effectively. Trained staff can handle the child's situation without judgment, providing the necessary support and guiding the victim to the appropriate services. To ensure a holistic impact on children, it is the setting's responsibility to collaborate with multiple agencies dedicated to children's welfare. Creating a safe environment for children, along with addressing safeguarding issues, is crucial. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has a major influence on these practices. The UNCRC recognises the child as an individual, and practitioners must adhere to this to ensure that children's rights are upheld. Settings should adopt a child-centered approach where the child's voice is heard and valued.

Once the settings ensure that the above guidelines and frameworks are being taught to all staff through comprehensive training, they can adopt an effective approach to safeguarding matters, which significantly impacts children's welfare. It is important for every setting to prioritise children's rights to ensure they receive the appropriate support they need. This approach will help reduce the number of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

cases in the future. Regular training for staff on how to safeguard children is essential for proper referral and reporting of CSA cases to the appropriate authorities.

Additionally, the ability to collaborate with multiple agencies is an important aspect of safeguarding children. Adhering to guidelines and legislation is also a significant factor in protecting children's well-being.

In our chosen case to address Lucy's problem, we ensured that we reported the incident to the local social services and police. This case is particularly complicated because Lucy is very young and has been manipulated by her father, who also exhibits controlling behavior towards her mother. It is our setting's responsibility to know the child and monitor any changes in behavior. However, in Lucy's case, she started attending our nursery only recently, and the family is quite new to us. We adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Children Act (2024) and the "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023) document. By following our local safeguarding policy, we made sure that Lucy was safe. To further support this safeguarding matter, we contacted the police to ensure all appropriate measures were taken.

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