

Reflective paper: Safeguarding Children in the Early Years

The research process for the initial child protection conference we had has helped me further my skills and knowledge and developed as a professional within the field of safeguarding children. Numerous legislation Act's and policies were read up on during my research process for our group discussion along with various frameworks. According to NSPCC (2017) legislation frameworks are used to avoid any negative behaviour that can harm children or require action to protect them, and to protect their well-being and safeguarding them.

Before I met up with the other members of the group to begin the preparation for our Child Protection conference, I researched information myself to help build my knowledge around safeguarding, child abuse and the legislation Acts in the early years. NSPCC (2017) states that the reason for safeguarding legislations and frameworks are to promote children's welfare and protect them from harm, abuse and any form of maltreatment. Safeguarding ensures that children grow up in a safe and effective care, and that they have the best experiences in life and the best outcomes. Unicef (no date) states that in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them. Dudley Safeguarding Children Board Procedures (2017) states that there are 4 main categories which abuse can fall into which is Physical abuse, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse and Neglect.

The Welsh Assembly Government (no date) states that The Children Act 1989 legislates for children in England and Wales which came from the case study of Jasmine Beckford. The intention is so that children's welfare and developmental needs are paramount and to be protected from any harm. HM Government (2015) states that children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. According to the Welsh Assembly Government (no date) The Children Act 1989 also reflects on some of the articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as:

- Protection from harm;
- Respect for a child's race, culture and ethnicity;
- Parents responsibility for bringing up children;

- Parents duty to take account of a child's wishes and feelings in decisions taken that affect them.

In our conference the Children Act 1989 was mentioned as it is the local authority's duty to decide if the children were in need and at risk of being neglected.

The NSPCC (2017) states that The Children Act 2004 strengthens the Children Act 1989 and encourages partnerships between different agencies working with the children. According to Welsh Assembly Government (no date), the local authorities must cooperate to improve children and young people's well-being, therefore, the Children Act 2004 placed a duty on every local authority in Wales that they must assign a lead director and lead member for children and young people's services. It was required for Children and young people partnership to carry out a plan to improve children's well-being. These plans are based on the Assembly Government's 7 core aims which are:

- A flying start in life
- A comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities
- Enjoy the best possible health and freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation
- Access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities
- Be listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised
- Have a safe home and community which supports physical and emotional well-being
- Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

As stated in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 every person who is in contact with children and young people should:

- have received appropriate child protection training,
- have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children,
- be alert to any signs of neglect or abuse and know when and how to make a referral to social services or the police, as they both have statutory powers to investigate suspected abuse.

From reflecting on my research, I have learnt that reporting a concern about a child with signs of neglect and/or abuse is a very hard-working process, which involves a great deal of preparation before the initial child protection conference is held.

According to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 there are six stages of a child protection process, which are:

1. The referral
2. Initial assessment
3. Strategy discussion
4. Strategy meeting
5. Child Protection Section 47 Enquiries by Social Services and/or the police
6. Child Protection conference

The All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 states that making a referral should be made to social services as soon as anyone is concerned about the welfare of a child, especially within 24 hours. I knew about this from previous training, but on the other hand I didn't realise how much information is needed for the social services regarding the child before going any further. Stated in the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008, all referrals made via telephone or made in person must be confirmed in writing within 2 days of making the referral. The information needed by the referrer which I learned through researching are:

- The nature of the concerns;
- How and why those concerns have arisen;
- The full name, address and date of birth (or age) of the child;
- The names, addresses and dates of birth/ages of family members, along with any other names which they use or are known by;
- The names and relationship of all those with parental responsibility, where known, should be recorded;
- The name, address & date of birth of parent's partner;
- The name, address and date of birth of any other adults living in the household;
- The names of other professionals involved with the family, including the name of the child's school and GP;
- Any information you have on the child's developmental needs and his/her parents or caregiver's ability to respond to these needs within the context of the wider family and environment;
- Any information affecting the safety of staff

I then learned that within 7 working days the Social Services undertake an initial assessment to authorize whether the child requires protection. The person making the

assessment must see to the child which may only be briefly to see if they are satisfied that the child is and feels safe. The strategy discussion is where the police and social services share and discuss all information gathered where they can decide on the next course of action within 24 hours, I read this information from the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008.

In our initial Child Protection conference, we had three members in our group. We all worked extremely well as a team, and contributed equally for each of our roles. We began by researching what different agencies were needed at a child protection conference and then decided on which one's were essential for the conference. I decided to be the police officer, Kimberly was the Social Service officer and Meinir played the key worker role. We also decided that we needed a report from the mother and from the family's gp. We gathered the information for each of our responsibilities that were needed and discussed it between the group before confirming it was necessary for our discussion.

Reflecting on my role as a police officer I learned a large amount of information regarding their responsibilities during a child protection conference. HM Government (2015) stated in the working together to safeguard children policy 2015 that the police officer's responsibilities include identifying when a child's welfare is at risk and in need of protection from any cause of harm, as children have the right to full protection offered by the criminal law. The police also hold crucial information about children who is likely to suffer or is suffering from any significant harm and this information must be passed on to all other professionals to protect the children. In case of any emergencies where a child is suffering significant harm and is in severe risk, the police have the power under section 46 of the Children Act 1989 to remove a child from their home to ensure instant protection. This was not the case in our situation as we decided the child was not in significant harm at that point. Regarding our child protection conference, my role was to provide the information on what convictions the mothers new partner has. Through researching this topic, I gained extra knowledge relating to what the different penalties for each conviction are.

Whilst researching I came across that social service officers have the lead role in responding to children in need and ensuring that all agencies work together. According to the Child Law advice (no date) the role of a social worker plays a big part in a child's referral, they have a legal duty to investigate any concerns about the safety and welfare of children. They also work closely with members of the police, health workers

and any other professionals who are connected to the child and family. Legislation (no date) states it is the Social Services responsibility to assess the needs of a child and decide whether a child needs further care and support under section 21 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Legislation (no date) states that the social services team has a duty to investigate under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm.

I learned that the key worker is the person who reads out the report which they made when making the referral and ensures that the children's health, safety and welfare are taken care of. According to Dudley Safeguarding Children Board Procedures (2017) when a referral is made from a key worker they must provide as much information as possible to the social services. The All Wales Child Protection Procedure 2008 states that while respecting the confidentiality of the child and family, the referrer should be given information regarding action taken, to include the safeguarding arrangements for the child and the appropriateness of the referral.

The family's gp informed us that the child was healthy, and no major concerns were made. According to the Department of Health (2002) the health services play an important role in safeguarding children as they ensure that the children and family receive the care, support and treatment needed to promote children's health and development.

Reflecting on my research I read that there are many professionals that work together to protect children from harm by following the correct frameworks and procedures. The Department of Health (2002) states that the purpose of multi-agency working is for organisations, services and professionals who provide services to children and their families to work together. HM Government (2006) states that effective participation between agencies and professionals ensures the welfare of children, in particular protecting them from significant harm.

Batty (2005) states that the first act of parliament was introduced in 1889. This act was based for the prevention of cruelty to children. Police were able to arrest anyone who maltreated children and could enter a home if a child was thought to be in significant harm. The act included guidelines on the employment of children and outlawed begging. According to NSPCC (2017) since the 1880s the legislation to prosecute people which have been accused of child cruelty has been in force but has taken a high amount of child abuse deaths and inquiries to establish the child protection

system there is today. I was interested to find out what the outcome of children being abused today were. With research on NSPCC (2017) saying that the statistics shown today are extremely high stating that the police have recorded over 14,000 offences of cruelty and neglect against children in 2015/2016. There were over 58,000 children identified as needing protection from abuse in the UK in 2016 and there are currently 94,000 children in the UK in care.

Whilst researching I was aware of the reason why the Criminal Records Bureau has been changed to The Disclosure and Barring Services. I read about Ian Huntley having a string of offences as he kept changing his identity, and after the case of Holly and Jessica things started to change and the CRB was being replaced. The Government UK (no date) states that the DBS has been operated since 2012 which has replaced the CRB and ISA, ensuring that it helps employers make safer decisions regarding recruitment and prevents unsuitable people working with children.

From doing this module it has improved my knowledge and skills on safeguarding children and it will help me grow professionally within my role as a teaching assistant. I am clearer about the process of a referral; the different legislation acts and frameworks and the different responsibilities the agencies and professionals have during the referral.

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