

In safeguarding, professionals follow the '5 R's': Recognise, Respond, Record, Report, and Refer. These actions guide how to identify concerns, act promptly, keep accurate records, communicate issues, and escalate through proper channels (Home Office, 2024).

Recognise means being alert to signs of abuse or neglect. Professionals must watch for behavioural, emotional, or physical indicators, changes in presentation, or disclosures. The Department for Education's *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2023) says professionals need to recognise concerns early. This allows timely intervention and protection (HM Government, 2023a).

Respond requires early years professionals to handle disclosures calmly and sensitively. They should allow the child time to speak and listen attentively. Professionals must explain that concerns may need to be shared. Prompt action ensures the disclosure is taken seriously and directed to the correct channels. This aligns with guidance from Ofsted and the NSPCC. Both organisations emphasise that suspicions must never be ignored (GOV UK, 2025; NSPCC, 2025).

Report means notifying the designated safeguarding lead or senior professional immediately. Accurate, timely reporting ensures escalation to those with authority to act (HM Government, 2023b).

Record means clearly, factually, and securely documenting observations, disclosures, or suspicions. Dates, times, and actions must be taken in all records. According to NSPCC guidance, safeguarding records must follow organisational procedures for accuracy, security, and retention (NSPCC, 2022).

‘Refer’ means reporting concerns to the local authority children’s social services when a child is at risk. Welsh law requires professionals to report under Section 130 of the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act*. *This leads to specialist assessment and protection* (Wales Safeguarding Procedures, 2021).

The 5 R’s guide early years professionals to: recognise, respond, record, report, and refer. These focused actions prioritise children’s safety and well-being.

Completing the safeguarding course has been both eye-opening and deeply personal for me. I’ve learned so much about the legislative frameworks that exist to protect children, including the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. These laws are not just paperwork. They outline the clear responsibilities that professionals have to identify, respond to, and report concerns about a child’s safety. Learning about this gave me a genuine appreciation for the structured processes in place to protect children and how vital it is that all professionals follow them accurately.

The case reviews we studied were particularly impactful. Reading about real-life situations where safeguarding failed, or where early intervention prevented harm, brought the legislation to life. They showed me that safeguarding is not just a set of procedures, but a serious responsibility that can profoundly affect a child’s life. It made me reflect on how crucial it is to observe subtle changes in behaviour, to listen carefully to children, and to act without hesitation if something feels wrong.

This topic has also hit close to home for me. Having experienced childhood abuse, I know how isolating and confusing it can feel when adults fail to notice or respond. Studying safeguarding has helped me process those experiences and channel them into a determination to make a difference. It has reinforced the importance of creating safe environments, of being vigilant, and of ensuring that children feel seen, heard, and supported.

Overall, this course has strengthened both my knowledge and my personal commitment. I now feel more confident in understanding my responsibilities, more observant of potential concerns, and more determined to take action when necessary. Safeguarding is not just a professional requirement; it is a moral and human responsibility. I feel better prepared to support children and families and to contribute to a culture where every child's safety and well-being are prioritised.

Reference List

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