

Self-Reflection

Before beginning this task, I already had a good understanding of safeguarding, both through my training and hands-on experience in early years settings. I knew the core signs of abuse and neglect and the importance of following reporting procedures. I also understood that every professional has a duty to act when concerned about a child's well-being. However, working through this scenario in depth and taking on the perspective of a social worker gave me new insights into how safeguarding practice works in real-life situations. It deepened my knowledge of legislation, improved my ability to critically analyse behaviour, and helped me reflect on the emotional demands of making safeguarding decisions.

One of the key things I learned is how crucial it is to see the bigger picture when safeguarding concerns arise. I already knew that one-off incidents could be serious, but this task showed me how often safeguarding cases involve patterns of smaller concerns—like changes in behaviour, hygiene, or emotional state—that build over time. I now have a better understanding of the concept of cumulative harm, which can arise from long-term exposure to neglect, stress, or emotional abuse. Daniel's withdrawal, his hygiene, and the atmosphere at home all added up to form a serious risk. This learning reflects the guidance in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines on child maltreatment, which stress the importance of recognising combinations of indicators rather than waiting for clear "proof" (NICE, 2017).

I also gained a much deeper understanding of the decision-making process involved in safeguarding. While I already knew we had to refer concerns, I didn't fully appreciate how complex professional judgement can be—especially when families are uncooperative, or when harm is emotional rather than physical. The scenario helped me reflect on how to balance risk and relationship: keeping communication open with families while staying focused on the child's best interests

I also learned more about how child protection procedures work in Wales. While I had previously heard of the All Wales Child Protection Procedures, I didn't fully understand how they're used in practice. Now I know that they provide a shared framework across all agencies and outline clearly what to do at each stage—from identifying a concern to holding an Initial Child Protection Conference. This reinforces the need for good multi-agency working, which I now see not as a formality but as essential. Everyone, from nursery keyworkers to social workers and health professionals, contributes something vital.

A big part of my personal development came through reflecting on the emotional impact of safeguarding work. The idea of removing children from their home or challenging a parent's ability to care for them is emotionally difficult. At the same time, this task reminded me of the ethical responsibility we have to act, even when it feels uncomfortable. I connected this to the Ethical Framework for Social Work in

2400032
ECEY5011
Words- 680

Wales (Social Care Wales, 2020), which emphasises courage, compassion, and a strong child-centred focus. It also made me realise how important it is for professionals to have supervision and emotional support, as safeguarding decisions can carry a lot of weight.

Another shift in my thinking came around the idea of children's participation. I've always believed in listening to children, but this task made me think more about how even young children like Daniel, who may not fully express their feelings, still communicate through behaviour. I now understand more clearly that safeguarding practice involves listening in different ways—through observation, tone, posture, and play. This supports the guidance in the Welsh Government's "Keeping Learners Safe" framework (2022), which encourages practitioners to be attentive to all forms of communication, particularly in early years.

Lastly, I now see safeguarding not just as about preventing harm, but also about promoting long-term well-being. This connects to the Early Years Outcomes Framework and Welsh NMS (National Minimum Standards), which both stress the importance of safe, stable, and nurturing environments from birth (Care Inspectorate Wales, 2016). My thinking has moved from a reactive mindset to a more preventative one—understanding how early intervention can stop serious harm before it happens.

Reference list

Care Inspectorate Wales (2016) *National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for children up to the age of 12 years*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available at: <https://careinspectorate.wales>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2017) *Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s (Clinical guideline CG89)*. London: NICE. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg89>

Social Care Wales (2020) *Code of Professional Practice for Social Care*. Cardiff: Social Care Wales. Available at: <https://socialcare.wales/codes-of-practice/code-of-professional-practice>

Welsh Government (2022) *Keeping Learners Safe: The role of local authorities, governing bodies and proprietors of independent schools under the Education Act 2002*. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/keeping-learners-safe>