



Early years – safeguarding case studies

Case study 1:

Stephen works in a wraparound setting in the village where he lives. One of the children that attends the setting is Mair, who is five years old and has been attending the setting since she was a baby. Mair attends the setting before and after school and full time during the school holidays. Mair lives with her parents and her older brother, 12-year-old Tim, who is from Mair's mum's previous marriage. The family live in the same village as the setting. Mair is very sociable and chatty, she gets on well with the other children and gets involved in all the activities at the setting.

After a weekend during the school holidays, Mair's dad drops her off at the setting, but instead of carrying out her usual routine – taking her coat and getting involved in the activities that are taking place, Mair does not want to remove her coat and says she is cold and her arms hurt. When Stephen asks why it's hurting, she answers that she bumped herself on some furniture when helping to tidy her room at home. She says it was Tim's fault.

Mair seems quieter than usual for the rest of the day. Stephen notices that Mair's right wrist appears swollen and has a greenish tinge. Stephen reports this verbally to the setting manager who agrees that Stephen should speak to Mair's parents about what happened to her arm.

At the end of the day, Mair's mother and father come to collect her and Stephen asks how Mair hurt herself. They say she is always clumsy and it must have been when she was helping feed the chickens in their garden the day before. Stephen challenges this saying the bruise looked older than that and that Mair has said Tim was responsible. Mair's parents get defensive and angrily tell Stephen that they are more than capable of looking after their daughter.

Stephen is now concerned that Mair may have been abused. He writes a report as follows:

On Monday this week, Mair Jones arrived with a badly bruised and swollen arm. I think her brother had been fighting with her again as he can be jealous of the extra attention Mair gets from her parents and he is often in trouble with the police. I spoke to her parents who got defensive and stormed off. They are most likely trying to cover up the fact that they cannot look after Mair properly any more, but they want to keep the family together and not involve anyone else.

- Has Stephen made a set of assumptions?
- Has he shown prejudices towards people and is using information about Tim that is not backed up with any source?
- Has he been objective or factual and does he risk being accused of bias, unprofessionalism and even libel as he is making accusations?

Stephen is right to be concerned about the injury and the two different accounts about how it occurred, along with Mair's unusual behaviour and her parents' response. Stephen acted correctly in not questioning Mair too much and checking with his manager before speaking with her parents.



Stephen was also correct in not sharing his suspicions with anyone but the manager. He recognised the possible signs of abuse and reported them appropriately straight away and followed this up with a written record. His record would have been improved if he had read something like this:

On Monday this week, Mair Jones attended the setting all day. She was wearing a thick winter coat which she refused to take off saying her right arm was sore. She did not speak much and did not want to join in with any play activities. This is unusual for her as she usually can't wait to join in. I could see her right wrist seemed swollen and had a greenish marking, like a bruise. When asked what had happened, she said she had hurt her arm tidying up her room the day before and that it was her brother Tim's fault.

Did Stephen give an accurate report?

After discussing this with my manager, we agreed I should speak to Mair's parents who told me they thought she hurt herself yesterday feeding the chickens in the garden and that she is clumsy. They became defensive and angry, and said they were more than capable of looking after their daughter. They left with Mair and she seemed keen to go home with them. I updated my manager and have referred the incident to our setting's designated safeguarding officer.

- Why is it important to report and record in relation to safeguarding?
- List what you need to record
- How would you report your concerns in line with your setting's policies and procedures?

Case study 2:

Nisha is six years old. She has a physical disability, which means that she often falls over easily and bruises – she wants to play a game of tag with friends. Nisha is in nursery and is four years old. She sees the other children playing on the yard outside her nursery class room. It is a safe area with a fence around it and there is no access from the outside.

You are the assistant nursery practitioner.

- What would your concerns be?
- What actions should you take?

Case study 3:

You are a childminder and looking after Gethin who is seven years old. You are aware he has been sexually abused in the past. He is very unsettled before his nap and he wants you to sit with him until he goes to sleep.

- What would your concerns be?
- What actions should you take?

You would be concerned because you are aware of the effect of the abuse he suffered in the past. It is



important for Gethin that he has the reassurance that you can sit with him until he goes to sleep. You would need to be mindful of how you sit with him and that appropriate actions are taken at all times.

Case study 4:

Lydia is 11 years old and attends a private school. Her father is a heart consultant and her mother is a dentist. Lydia does not want for anything. They have a lovely house which hosts stables, an indoor swimming pool and a games room, but Lydia has no-one to share them with. They live in the countryside, almost an hour away from both the school and the nearest town.

Lydia gets invited to go to her friend Chloe's house after school for pizza and a film. There will be five other girls there. Lydia is excited to go, she doesn't often get included in their activities after school because she can't invite anyone home, as her parents work long hours.

Lydia's parents decline the offer and tell her that she will need to come straight home from school as usual to do her homework because her parents aren't free to collect her later as the daily routine would be out of sync.

Lydia's parents are very controlling, they prevent outsiders coming to the house and Lydia from making close friendships. They place high expectations on her, believing that she will only be happy by following them into a similar career. However, they are neglecting Lydia by their absence and by failing to make her social development a priority. There is plenty of money but not enough love.

- What effect will this have on Lydia?
- What could have been a compromise?
- How will this impact on Lydia's relationship with her school friends?

It will obviously make Lydia feel left out from her group of friends and segregated. This could lead to Lydia being bullied, which would have larger implications. There needs to be a compromise in this situation, which could be Lydia going to Chloe's house for two hours and then coming home to do her work.

Case study 5:

Daniel lives with his mother Dawn in a one bedroom flat. Dawn had an accident many years ago which means that she can't work. Daniel looks after Dawn when he is not in school. He sleeps in the lounge on the sofa. They get their food mainly from the foodbank. Daniel does not have much time in the morning before he goes to school to get himself ready. They are also on a water meter so he does not want to use too much water. No one in Daniel's school is aware of the situation, he has been too ashamed to even confide in his teacher.

When he was in school last week, he heard two girls in his class comment that he smells and that his hair always looks greasy. Sadly, this is true. I don't think Daniel has told anyone but I'm worried about his homelife. I am a classroom support assistant.



- What are the implications of this for Daniel?
- How could you support Daniel?

This is obviously a very difficult and intense situation for Daniel. You should support him and speak with the school. It was also be a good idea for you to try and get some additional support and carers in to look after his mum. You would need to speak to him about this first because it would be daunting for him. With tact, he might respond well to the practical offer of some soap and a towel, and use of the changing rooms when no-one else is around.

Case study 6:

Lucy is seven years old. She is not on social media but both her mothers are. Lucy was born as a sperm donor baby to two mothers who are in a lesbian marriage. They form a warm and loving family of three and might even try for another baby, a little brother for Lucy.

One of her mothers posted a photo of the three of them on Facebook as Lucy celebrated her birthday. An article appeared attached to the link that showed she was one of the first sperm donor babies in Wales. Lucy's mothers are in a social media group with some other parents from the school.

On Monday morning when Lucy went to school, she noticed a lot of whispering, her usual group of friends ignored her and some of the bigger children talked about dykes and lesbos when she walked past. As her class teacher hears this, she asks to speak with Lucy.

- What would your concerns be?
- What actions should you take?

Case study 7:

Betsi is four years old. She has four bruises on her left arm and one on her right leg. Betsi's nursery practitioner noticed this and raised it with her. Betsi's first language is Welsh. She can speak and understand English, but not very well.

She told Sam (the practitioner) that she fell off their climbing frame in the garden at home. When Betsi's parents came to pick her up, Sam told them that she had noticed the bruises and the mum said that she would take her to the doctor to make sure that everything was okay.

At the appointment, the doctor they saw was not a Welsh speaker. When the medic was asking Betsi questions, the mum had to translate and act as an interpreter.

- What would your concerns be?
- Is Betsi having a fair discussion with the doctor?
- How could this situation be improved?