

Case Study – Social Worker and Safeguarding Children



I work as a social worker in the local authority Children's Social Care department. My team receives and assesses referrals from people who have concerns about a child. Referrals come from a wide range of individuals, including health visitors, teachers, youth workers and substance misuse counsellors. They also come from agencies, including the local women's refuge, the hospital, early years settings and after school clubs. Sometimes we get referrals from members of the public who may be concerned about the child of a family member, friend or neighbour.

When someone has a concern, they may ring us first to clarify what to do. We give some informal advice and guidance, either to try another option or to make a formal referral. The legislation we use to guide our work is the **Children Act 1989**, which gives us definitions of the areas of concern. The process we follow is set out in statutory guidance in **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006**. Additionally, we have our own agency procedures and policies.

Our **Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)** is responsible for multi-agency safeguarding procedures for our area, which must follow the guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006. The LSCB also offers multi-agency training in a range of safeguarding topics, such as domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, and parental mental ill health. Attending training helps me to understand how these issues in a can impact on children, how to analyse risk to children and how to offer support or access interventions to help.

In order to register as a practising social worker with the General Social Care Council, I must engage in continuous professional development. I also meet with a wide range of other professionals, to discuss issues and find out about services that could support my work.

When we receive a referral we undertake an **Initial Assessment** to determine further action. We speak with the referrer, the family, including the child if appropriate, and any other key people who may have information, such as the school or doctor. Then we decide what course of action to take, from the following:

- 1 No further action (the parent/carer has a good explanation for the concern).
- 2 The child is in need of services, as set out in s17 of the Children Act 1989.
- 3 The child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, as set out at s47 of the Children Act 1989.

If the child is in need of services, we will ask the parent/carer for their consent to make a referral and share information to access the services the child and family need, such as additional support with parenting.

If the child is suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, we will hold a **Strategy Meeting** to determine the immediate actions required to protect the child. We may have done this before the initial assessment if serious concerns were indicated. On very rare occasions, we need to take emergency action to remove a child in order to offer protection, but usually we are able to work with the family/carer to improve the child's situation. We will then undertake a full **Core Assessment**, looking in far greater detail at the child's developmental needs, the parenting capacity and the environment around the child.

Meanwhile, we arrange a **Child Protection Case Conference**, chaired by an **Independent Reviewing Officer** and attended by the social worker involved and all those concerned with the child (eg teacher, doctor, health visitor, youth worker), including the family. The purpose of the case conference is to share information, assess and analyse risk and reach a decision on the measures required to protect the child. Professionals provide a report and discuss the risk. Those present will then decide if they believe the child should be made subject to a **Child Protection Plan**, detailing the actions required to protect the child, who is responsible for each action and when they are due for completion. A date will also be identified for reviewing the plan.

A **Review Meeting** is where all the people who attended the Child Protection Case Conference come together to discuss progress against the Child Protection Plan. The meeting determines if sufficient change has been made and maintained to remove the need for a Child Protection Plan.