



Activity 9: recording suspicions and allegations

(A fictitious case for training only)

Terry is a support worker in a day centre for people with learning disabilities. He gets on well with Mair who uses the day centre regularly. Mair lives with her parents and a brother, Jon. Mair comes to the centre after the weekend and instead of her usual routine of putting her coat away then chatting with everyone in the 'use it again' craft workshop she says she is cold and her arm hurts. When Terry asks why it is hurting she answers that she bumped herself on some furniture when helping to clean at home.

She says it was Jon's fault. Mair seems quieter than usual for the rest of the day. Terry notices that Mair's right wrist appears swollen and has a greenish tinge. Mair won't let Terry look at her arm and keeps her coat on all day. He reports this verbally to the centre manager who agrees Terry should ask Mair if he can ask her parents what happened. Mair agrees.

At the end of the day Mair's mother and father come to collect her and Terry asks how Mair hurt herself. They say she is always being clumsy and it must have been when she was feeding the chickens in their garden last night. Terry challenges this saying that the bruise looked older than that and that Mair had said Jon was responsible. They get defensive and angrily say they are more than capable of looking after their own daughter.

Terry now has reasonable cause to suspect that Mair may have been abused. He writes a report as follows:

On Tuesday this week Mair Jones arrived at the centre 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 have to keep the family together and not involve anyone else.



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Terry has made a set of assumptions here. He has shown prejudices about people and is using information about Jon which is not backed up with any source. He has not been objective or factual and risks being accused of bias, being unprofessional and even libel as he is making accusations. Terry is right to be suspicious because of the injury, the two different accounts, Mair's unusual behaviour and the parent's response. He acted correctly in not questioning Mair too much and asking for her agreement to speak with her family. Terry 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 by reading something like this:

Today 6 June 2016, Mair attended 'The Beeches' day centre. She was wearing a thick winter coat, which she refused to take off saying her right arm was sore. She did not speak much today and did not want to come into the craft group. This was unusual for her as she usually can't wait to roll her sleeves up and start making things in the group. I could see her right wrist seemed swollen and had a greenish marking like a bruise. When I asked what had happened she said she had hurt her arm cleaning in the house the day before and that 'it was her brother Jon's fault'. After discussing with the manager it was agreed I speak with Mair's family after asking for her agreement. Mair said I could ask her parents about the sore arm and they told me they thought she had hurt herself yesterday feeding the chickens in the garden and that she is always clumsy. They became angry with me when I asked but Mair seemed keen to go with them.