

Exercise

Wasim Akhtar

Wasim Akhtar is two years old.

Wasim spends most of his time with his mother in the family home. The health visitor has continued to make regular home visits as she had concerns during Wasim's early months that he appeared to spend lots of time sleeping in his bedroom. However, when he was brought downstairs, there was no indication that he had been asleep. He has no speech and communicates by pointing and gesturing. There is no apparent eye contact between Wasim and his mother, Mabina, and the health visitor has never seen Wasim approach his mother for comfort or reassurance. He is a slim boy and his weight is between the 2nd and 9th percentile (low weight for age), but Mabina reports that he eats well.

The health visitor has never seen any evidence of food preparation or cooking in the home and there are no toys visible in the downstairs of the house.

Mabina and Wasim do not attend any local playgroups and do not associate or socialise with any members of the local community – their extended family live 50 miles away and are only able to keep in touch with Mabina by phone on a weekly basis.

There is a travel cot in the hallway that Mabina says she uses to keep Wasim safe when she needs to go upstairs or answer the phone. Twice, when the health visitor has called recently, she has seen Wasim sitting in the cot, which is immaculately clean, but with no toys visible.

A recent assessment has been completed by the health visitor, who is worried about Wasim.

Questions

1. What are the indicators that Wasim's needs are not being met?
2. If these needs are not met, is he at suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm?
3. What further information is needed?
4. What can professionals do to help Wasim and his family?

It may be useful to focus your thinking around the impact on Wasim when he is:

- a newborn baby
- a toddler
- a child of school age
- a teenager.

Noticing neglect

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