**SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELL-BEING (WALES) ACT**

**CASE STUDY**

**Stewart Family**

Dave and Maria Stewart have three children, Bobby aged nine, Kayleigh aged six and Mika aged nine months.

The police have been called out to the family home on five occasions over the last nine years because neighbours reported shouting and screaming. Both parents have always denied any physical violence, although damage to the home has been noted on more than one occasion – with holes punched in doors and the kitchen in disarray. Both parents have appeared to be under the influence of alcohol when police have attended. The family has agreed that the children can be taken to their maternal grandmother’s home on each occasion and no further action has been taken.

The most recent incident was last night. Dave had left the house by the time the police arrived. Baby Mika was crying and Maria appeared shaky and pale. She said that her mum could not help this time because she is in hospital. Maria is worried about her mum and worn out with visiting her. The older two children were seen by the police and appeared ‘cheerful and chatty’. The police decided it was safe to leave the children in their mother’s care.

Following this incident, a strategy discussion took place between children’s social services and the police (with input from colleagues from the children’s school, the family’s GP, heath visitor and the local housing warden). Information about the family held across various agencies was shared and included the following:

* Kayleigh and Bobby were both late to school the morning following the incident and Bobby fell asleep during lessons
* The home is generally clean but sparsely furnished with few toys available. The children’s school attendance is 82 per cent
* Maria recently visited her GP to ask for help with her depression. She said she feels exhausted and is struggling to sleep. Maria also told the doctor she is finding it hard to cope with Bobby’s behaviour. He sometimes shouts or swears at her and refuses to do what he is asked
* Dave was working for his brother until recently, but was laid off after they had an argument which ended in violence. Neighbours have complained to the housing department about loud music coming from the house late into the night. Dave was verbally abusive to the warden when he called round at 3pm to discuss this and appeared very drunk. The children could be heard playing upstairs
* Bobby is doing well in school. He is a popular boy who is on the football team. When asked about life at home, he appears guarded and wary, quickly changing the subject. He brags to the other boys about staying out late and his friendships with older children on the estate
* Kayleigh has become quiet and withdrawn in school since Mika’s birth. She is falling behind with her work and receives some additional support. Both children sometimes arrive in school looking unkempt with unbrushed hair, grubby, ill-fitting clothes and no PE kit. Kayleigh was recently found crying in the toilet after some of the girls called her ‘smelly’. She has been in trouble for taking the other children’s belongings and hiding them in her bag. At playtime, she tends to cling to the mealtime assistants, wanting to hold their hands and complaining of stomach aches. Kayleigh is due to have two decayed teeth taken out, but did not attend her last appointment
* Mika was born three weeks prematurely and small for her dates. The health visitor has not seen her for three months due to missed appointments. Her immunisations are overdue
* The school has offered additional support to the family, but this has been refused. The police have provided information about domestic violence services, but these have not been taken up. The consent forms have not been signed for Kayleigh to see the school counsellor. Maria used to go to the local children’s centre and had put her name down to attend a domestic violence workshop but then stopped attending

1. What are the strengths in this family?
2. What are the risks to the individuals in the family?
3. Who in the community could professionals approach to gather further information about the family and/or support the family?
4. What might be your approach to undertaking an assessment for the family?