

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABLED CHILDREN

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Aim:

To raise the awareness of professionals in order that strategies may be applied that will safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children.

I'm 3 times more likely to be abused because I have a disability. Make sure you understand my needs and what makes me vulnerable.



## LEARNING FROM SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

**Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility**

<https://www.manchestersafeguardingboards.co.uk/resource/serious-case-reviews/>

# Keeping children safe in education 2016, statutory guidance for schools and colleges

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy reflects the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children.

These can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

# What we know about disabled children's experiences of abuse

- Disabled children are at a greater risk of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect than non-disabled children
- Disabled children at greatest risk of abuse are those with behaviour/conduct disorders. Other high-risk groups include children with learning difficulties/disabilities, children with speech and language difficulties, children with health-related conditions and deaf children.
- Disabled children in residential care/schools face particular risks
- Bullying is a feature in the lives of many disabled children.

**‘We have the right to be safe’ Protecting disabled children from abuse,  
David Miller and Jon Brown 2014**

# What we know about what puts disabled children at risk

Factors that increase risk and lessen protection for disabled children include:

- ⦿ Attitudes and assumptions – e.g. A reluctance to believe disabled children are abused; minimising the impact of abuse; and attributing indicators of abuse to the child's impairment
- ⦿ Barriers to the disabled child and their family accessing support services
- ⦿ Issues related to a child's specific impairment – e.g. Dependency on a number of carers for personal or intimate care; impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse, difficulties in communicating; and an inability to understand what is happening or to seek help
- ⦿ Limited opportunities for disabled children to seek help from someone else
- ⦿ A lack of professional skills, expertise and confidence in identifying child protection concerns and the lack of an effective child protection response.

# Communication barriers

It's difficult for any child to tell someone they're being abused but deaf or disabled children with speech, language and communication needs face extra barriers.

Messages about what abuse is or how to keep safe are not always made accessible to deaf or disabled children. Without this knowledge children may not recognise that they are being abused or they might not have the right language to describe what's happening to them.

Professionals may have difficulty understanding a child's speech or they may not have the knowledge and skills to communicate non-verbally with a child.

Sometimes professionals rely on parents or carers to facilitate communication with deaf and disabled children or they seek an adult's views instead of the child's. This poses a risk if the child is being abused by their parent or carer or if the adult they are communicating through does not believe the child.

[http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/other\\_ways\\_of\\_speaking.pdf](http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/publications/other_ways_of_speaking.pdf)

# Why are disabled children more vulnerable? including children with learning disabilities

They may;

- be in contact and/or receive care from numerous people
- have fewer outside contacts than other children
- Receive personal/intimate care
- Have an impaired capacity to resist/avoid abuse
- Be inhibited about complaining because of the fear of losing services
- Be especially vulnerable to bullying and intimidation and/or be more vulnerable than other children to abuse by their peers.
- be isolated/have few opportunities for developing knowledge of sexual and personal relationships
- be 'schooled' to compliance and eager to please
- have low self-esteem and/or be less assertive
- have limited communication
- be less physically able to resist or run away



# Professional Curiosity:

- Professional Curiosity is the capacity and communication skill to explore and understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or accepting things at face value.
- Important to maintain a respectful relationship with families whilst asking open and probing questions to ascertain more information.

# Examples of Neglect and Disability

- ⦿ Failure to be taken to health appointments
- ⦿ Ignoring communication and stimulation needs
- ⦿ Equipment /adaptations
- ⦿ Feeding
- ⦿ Inappropriate or inadequate clothing
- ⦿ Deprivation of liquids/medication
- ⦿ Unresponsive to emotional/social needs
- ⦿ Misappropriate use of child's finances

# What can you do in school?

- ⦿ Effective communication with the child and colleagues is key to achieving good outcomes.
- ⦿ If you are concerned about a child you can talk to our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- ⦿ Liaise with our SENCO and Inclusion Lead who can provide further advice about the needs of our children.
- ⦿ Have clear understanding of our safeguarding, behaviour and SEND policies.
- ⦿ Have a clear understanding of referral routes and areas where you can get support

**Don't be afraid to raise concerns about a child!**

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/right-safe-disabled-children-abuse-report.pdf>

# Additional Safeguards

- ⦿ Making it common practice to help children with a disability make their wishes and feelings known in respect of their care and treatment.
- ⦿ Ensure that children receive appropriate PSHE.
- ⦿ Make sure children know how to raise a concern and give them access to a range of adults with whom they can communicate with. **Those children with communication impairments should have available to them at all times a means of being heard.**

# Think!

- ⦿ Be aware that children with a disability are more likely to be abused.
- ⦿ Be willing to acknowledge your own concerns.
- ⦿ Do not make allowances for stressed parent/carer.
- ⦿ Ask would this be acceptable if the child were not disabled?



Any Questions?