

01 Background



Children who live with a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health disability are amongst the most stigmatised and marginalised. Disabled children are significantly more at risk because of stigma, negative traditional beliefs and ignorance. (NSPCC 2014)

This briefing is about safeguarding disabled SEND children. SEND stands for Special educational needs and disabilities (children with physical disabilities (e.g. complex medical needs, hearing/visual impairment); Moderate/severe/profound learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders; children with psychological & emotional difficulties).

Disabled children have an equal right to protection from abuse (NSPCC 2014)

Why it matters 02



Professionals often miss or under-react to abuse/neglect of SEND children. There are a number of reasons for this, for example:

- Specialist equipment (can mark children, and mask inflicted injuries)
- Children with challenging behaviours, (may mark themselves or be marked as part of restraint which can mask inflicted injuries)
- Professionals identifying with parents (seeing parents as saints)
- The children's vulnerability and communication difficulties may attract people with a wish to harm children
- Parents of SEND children are dealing with a great deal more than parents of non-disabled children and may be more vulnerable

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Questions

- Do you have enough skill to communicate with SEND children?
- Are you clear about the added vulnerabilities of SEND children?
- Are you over-empathising with parents and losing the child?

03 Information



SEND children are under-represented in safeguarding work, yet adult survivor studies suggest that they are more likely to have been harmed during their childhoods.



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- Where might be a safe space to talk for the child
- Know where to get help and support - If you don't know, phone somebody!
- Develop resilience and keep going!
- Maintain Professional Curiosity in your work with SEND children - ask that difficult question! Record. Pass it on.
- Get supervision to help you to keep things in perspective and ensure that your decisions are safe.

who have trouble generalising learning may also be much more vulnerable to abuse such as CSE, radicalisation and online risks.

What to do

- Make children aware of abuse, and how to keep themselves safe and alert protective adults around them. This may mean giving them symbols/ language to report abuse.
- If you are working with a SEN&D child, ensure that you know:
 - The child's preferred method of communication
 - Who can help the child to communicate

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The population of SEND children in Lancashire is 2.2% of the total child population, whereas they are the subjects of initial case conferences in only 0.9 % of cases and 0.5% of all children subject to a plan.

This group of children are children in need, even when parenting is not compromised, but are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Being disabled is not a high risk indicator, but it is an indicator of vulnerability, so extra care is needed. Some risks, such as needing multiple carers, can multiply the situations of risk. Children



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