

Safeguarding Disabled Children Story Board

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1. The issue

The safeguarding of all children is critical for all partners in York. There is national evidence that disabled children can be more vulnerable than their peers (*Safeguarding Disabled Children in England* July 16 National Working Group report¹) and can be under represented in the context of children subject to a Child Protection Plan. In the report Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB) were found not to be taking sufficient account of this as a discrete issue and one for specific attention. City of York Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) has found, through audit and consideration of Serious Case Reviews from other local authorities, that this may be because disabled children sometimes struggle with outing into works what is happening to them and that, on occasion, their behaviour is interpreted in relation to their disability rather than as a response to something which is going on in their lives.

2. Our journey so far

- Children's Social Care: Safeguarding Referrals in regard to disabled children are subject to the same investigation as all children with Social Workers mindful that disabled children can be more vulnerable to abuse and may communicate what is happening to them in different ways.
- CYSCB's Case Review Group has disseminated learning from national SCRs about the importance of understanding whether a disabled child's behaviour is a result of their disability or as a result of abuse or an attempt to communicate that they are being abused.
- Consideration of a child's disability is included in Family Early Help Assessments supported by the Local Area Team Practitioners.
- SEN services and the Children Society have developed resources 'I'll Go First' to support practitioners to work with disabled children through safeguarding processes.
- In response to the National Working Group report CYSCB has refocused on the issue of safeguarding disabled children and young people.
- Multi-agency training is commissioned by CYSCB and provided for all practitioners working with children and their families, not just for those working with disabled children. The training is designed to increase

¹ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/safeguarding-disabled-children-england/>

awareness of the vulnerabilities of disabled children to abuse and to enhancing communication with disabled children so that they are heard.

- Safeguarding disabled children: vulnerability, resilience and communication: a 1-day, awareness and skills course, specifically targeted for practitioners and volunteers who are working with disabled children has also been held to enhance this.

3. Ongoing training:

- The CYSCB commissions 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. This course is at two levels: A: a basic overview covering many types of abuse and vulnerabilities and B: a more detailed course giving information about safeguarding processes and pathways. The focus is safeguarding as a whole. The training is accessible for all practitioners including – but not specifically - those working with disabled children.
- CYSCB commissions multi agency training specifically to increase practitioners' understanding and confidence in the specific issues involved in safeguarding children and young people with disabilities and improving skills in understanding and responding to their safeguarding needs

Education and schools:

- The Schools Safeguarding Adviser has worked with the Specialist Teaching Team and Educational Psychologists to enhance their understanding of safeguarding children. She also works with designated leads in all schools in regard to safeguarding all children including vulnerable children and those with disabilities.
- Safeguarding training is delivered for CYC taxi drivers contracted by education services to transport children to and from schools. Most of these children have disabilities of some sort.

4. What are we doing in York?

- The Local Area Teams have created a SEND Practitioner post to work with disabled children and young people and their families, and early help practitioners, to support them to access a range of services including Short Breaks.
- The CYSCB Business Plan has the safeguarding of disabled children (and the 'child's voice') running throughout.

- Since June 2017, CYSCB Sub-group Highlight Reports to Board must include the consideration that has been given to safeguarding disabled children and to the 'child's voice' during sub-group meetings.
- Also since June 2017 the CYSCB template for Partners Assurance Reports to Board detailing key partners actions in regard to safeguarding children, has included a discrete section asking specifically for an account of actions in regard to safeguarding disabled children and 'child's voice'.
- CYSCB is developing a multi-agency scorecard with partners in relation to data about disabled children and safeguarding.
- The CYSCB CSA&E/MfH Sub-group is working on finding data which will inform the group about disabled children who may have been exploited or subject to sexual abuse. The group is particularly focusing on sexually harmful behaviour and how early help services can intervene to prevent this behaviour escalating.
- The 'voice' of disabled children continues to be an important part of the new Voice Strategy due for publication in 2018.
- The Child Death Overview Panel is now asked for specific data on deaths of disabled children and whether there were any safeguarding concerns. This will be included in the CYSCB safeguarding disabled children scorecard. (In 2016/17 3 of the 14 child deaths (8 unexpected) in York were formally defined as being children who had disabilities.)

5. What difference has this made?

- Awareness has been raised amongst practitioners; CYSCB will carry out post training impact survey with practitioners to find out how they have put what they have learnt into practice.
- Safeguarding issues for disabled children have become much more part of conversations and discussions at both strategic level (CYSCB and CYSCB Sub-groups) and at front line practice level.
- Quality assurance processes are in place and single and multi-agency audit has become more systematic and includes a focus on disabled children
- Parents and carers can access information, advice and support from one central place.: <http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/families/Local%20Offer/local-offer-original.htm>
- The percentage of York Children in Need with SEN Support is higher than comparator groups (28.7% in 2016/17 compared to 22.2% for statistical



neighbours). The percentage of York Children who are Looked After with SEN Support is lower than comparator (31.97% compared to 35.2% statistical neighbours). There are less children in York who are looked after in SEN support, but more CiN, as York provides more early intervention support, to enable children to remain living with their families, through short breaks provision and support from Child in Need practitioners. The children accessing short breaks for over 100 hours are designated CiN, which boosts these figures and demonstrates our high levels of support, to reduce the likelihood of children becoming Looked After.

- The percentage of children who have an EHCP/statement who are CLA or CiN is broadly in line with comparator figures (27.7% compared to 28.2% SN CIN with EHCP/statement)
- We would expect to see a rise in numbers of children with Family Early Help Assessments (FEHA) and FEHA plans, following increased awareness of safeguarding for disabled children.

6. Areas for further action

- Community Care Inform in line single agency training re safeguarding and disabled children to be a requirement for all CSC staff.
- CYSCB continues to develop a multi-agency data set to understand the prevalence of safeguarding issues and disabled children.
- CYSCB at Board and Sub-group level will continue to focus on safeguarding of disabled children as a discrete issue and to seek assurance from all partners that the issues are understood and acted upon.
- CYSCB focus on Harmful Sexual Behaviour and, in particular, pathways for assessment and intervention for disabled children.
- As the LSCBs move to new safeguarding partnership arrangements in response to the abolition of LSCBs in the Children & Social Work Act and the new Working Together 2018 statutory guidance, the new Safeguarding Partnership in York will continue to seek this assurance and to support, train on and challenge activity in regard to safeguarding disabled children.
