

Safeguarding Disabled Children Storyboard

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Safeguarding Disabled Children

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 the former 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 Partnership (CYSCP) (formerly Board) has found, through audit and consideration of Serious Case Reviews (now Safeguarding Practice Reviews) from other local authorities, that this may be because disabled children sometimes struggle with putting into words 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.

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.
- CYSCP'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.
- Since 2016 and in response to the National Working Group report CYSCP refocused on the issue of safeguarding disabled children and young people

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

Ongoing training:

- CYSCP commissions multi agency training 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
- Multi-agency training on safeguarding disabled children is commissioned by CYSCP 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 awareness of the vulnerabilities of disabled children to abuse and to enhancing communication with disabled children so that they are heard.
- The CYSCP online Basic Safeguarding Awareness course includes information about safeguarding disabled children and questions to test understanding of their vulnerabilities.
- Information is available on the CYSCP website about safeguarding disabled children and their particular vulnerabilities.
- The CYSCP 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 but it does include information about safeguarding disabled children..

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.

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 CYSCP Business Plan has the safeguarding of disabled children (and the 'child's voice') running throughout the plan.
- Since June 2017, CYSCP Sub-group Highlight Reports to the Partnership 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 CYSCP 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'.
- CYSCP is developing a multi-agency scorecard with partners in relation to data about disabled children and safeguarding.
- The CYSCP Child Sexual Abuse/Exploitation//Missing from Home Sub-group is continually 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 going forward into 2019 and how early help services can intervene to prevent this behaviour escalating. This is in conjunction with the completion of a Learning Lessons Review earlier in the year in regard to a young person with learning difficulties.
- The 'voice' of disabled children continues to be an important part of the new Voice Strategy published to be published in 2019.
- The York & North Yorkshire Child Death Review Panel (CDRP) is now a member of the York and North Yorkshire Learning Disabilities Mortality Review (LeDEr) Steering Group and data is collated on the deaths of disabled children.

What difference has this made?

- Awareness has been raised amongst practitioners; CYSCP carries out post training impact surveys 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 (CYSCP and CYSCP 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>
- 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.

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.
- CYSCP continues to develop a multi-agency data set to understand the prevalence of safeguarding issues and disabled children.
- CYSCP at Partnership and Sub-group level continues 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.
- CYSCP focus on Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) and, in particular, pathways for assessment and intervention for disabled children. An HSB Action Plan is in place and support has been commissioned from the NSPCC in regard to audit and the use of the HSB Framework has been commissioned.
- The LSCB initiated its new safeguarding partnership arrangements in response to the Working Together 2018 statutory guidance in April 2018. The new CYSCP York will continue to seek this assurance and to support, train on and challenge activity in regard to safeguarding disabled children.

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