

7 Minute Briefing:

Safeguarding Disabled Children

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Introduction and Background

The learning in this briefing pertains to our system learning when working with disabled children with complex physical and learning needs.

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Who is this briefing for?

It is for all Islington professionals working together across acute and community settings

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Key Features of the Learning

Care can often involve several agencies working locally and outside our borough footprint.

Factors include historical and ongoing concerns where agencies are not able to consistently work in partnership with parents to address their child's complex needs.

This included medical advice not being followed by parents resulting in less favourable health outcomes

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Why it matters

- A Disabled child with complex needs has and will always have a life characterised by challenges relating to care needs. The local multi-agency system can lose the wider focus of providing a coordinated, comprehensive whole family framework of support, when the focus is on care and education needs.
- When professionals have to manage conflict, the child's voice and best interest is not always heard and can be lost.
- It is important to remember at all stages of involvement with the child and family, services need to reflect on effectiveness of their practice; having open and honest reviews of their practice, supported by robust safeguarding supervision.

"there is no right or wrong way to be we are all unique individuals"

Video: [We need to talk about disability](#)

- Professionals need to be able to recognise escalating safeguarding concerns in the context of legal threshold decisions.

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Key messages to consider when supporting the families

- Early help is designed to provide support and reduce risk, strengthen resilience, and create a supportive strength-based approach to addressing family issues and needs.
- All professionals working with children, when considering the nature of their intervention or relationship to the child should consider:
 - ✓ "What does this child like, want and need?"
 - ✓ "What is life like for this child, and how can we make it as good as possible for them?"
- All professionals working with children should understand the background history and chronology of contact with the child and family.
- Where there are difficulties with concordance professionals need to collaboratively explore with parents' and carers barriers and possible supports that can be put in place in the best interest of the child.
- Where there are differing professional opinions as to the level of concern and threshold for intervention, such cases should be discussed in safeguarding supervision and escalated in line with the [ISCP Escalation policy](#).
- The EHCP framework could be used to provide a core assessment process that can be utilised by all agencies.
- Cross agency communication is crucial when professionals identify a pattern of concerns about the care of the child. They should consider the use of professionals' meetings to explore what might be happening and how the system can effectively respond.
- The multi-agency system should use independent advocates for all Disabled children with complex needs and ill health. In Islington there is now a dedicated advocacy worker to support Disabled Children.

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Advocacy referral pathway

Allocation of an advocate for CYP can be requested using above eligibility criteria by completing an Advocacy Referral form which is emailed to the Children's Active Involvement Service (CAIS). Contact for enquiries and/or referral form: vernon.angel2@islington.gov.uk; CAISTeam@islington.gov.uk.

[Read more about the advocacy pathway](#)

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Safeguarding risks and Vulnerabilities for Disabled children

- over three times more likely to be abused than their peers
- more likely to experience multiple forms of abuse
- most likely to be abused within the family
- more likely to be abused at an earlier age than their peers and for a longer period of time
- less likely to disclose and more likely to delay disclosure
- most likely to disclose to a trusted adult.