Research tells us that disabled and deaf children are more vulnerable to abuse and/or neglect than other children. Most parents of disabled and deaf children take good care of their children. Where care is not good enough the impact of neglect can have a very significant impact on their health and well-being because of their additional needs.

Disabled and deaf children are more vulnerable to bullying. They can be particularly at risk of cyber-bullying because of their dependence on digital technology and increased vulnerability.



## Support available for disabled and deaf children and their families:

### Islington's Disabled Children's Team

For social work assessment and support for children with severe and complex disabilities

Tel 020 7527 3366 Email disabledchildren.team@islington.gov.uk

#### Central referral team:

For health assessment, diagnostics and early support for children with additional health needs and disabilities

Tel 020 3316 1877 Email whh-tr.islchildrensreferrals@nhs.net

#### Centre 404

Information, advice and support for parents/carers of children with disabilities.

Tel 020 3316 1930 Email general@centre404.org.uk

### Short breaks

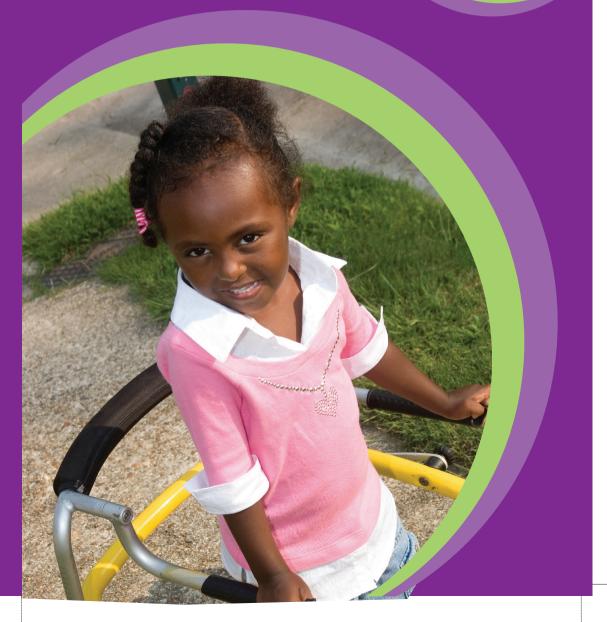
Short breaks and activities for children with severe and complex disabilities Tel 0207 527 8611 Email short.breaks@islington.gov.uk

Islington Safeguarding Children Board
3 Elwood Street
London N5 1EB

Tel: 020 7527 4209/4234 Visit: www.islingtonscb.org.uk

# Safeguarding Disabled and Deaf Children





## Why are children with disabilities and additional needs more vulnerable?

- They are likely to come into contact with a greater number of services than non-disabled children and receive intimate care from more people
- They are more likely to spend time away from their families in short breaks services and residential schools
- Negative social attitudes towards children with disabilities can affect people's willingness to believe that abuse has taken place
- Disabled children and their families can be made to feel more isolated because of negative attitudes
- Behaviour can sometimes be misinterpreted as being a consequence of a disability when in fact it is a sign of abuse
- Abuse can be 'excused' as part of the stress and difficulties of caring for a disabled child
- Some disabled and deaf children find it more difficult to communicate what they are feeling and what is happening to them
- Staff/volunteers are not always good at understanding what disabled and deaf children are trying to say
- Disabled and deaf children can be less involved in the decision making about their lives as a result of communication difficulties
- Limited personal safety programmes and personal, social and sex education for disabled and deaf young people results in them being less aware about abusive behaviour
- Many disabled and deaf children from black and minority ethnic communities face multiple discrimination

# Disabled children can be abused and neglected in ways that other children are not.

### Some types of abuse disabled children experience are:

- Parents/carers not delivering the health/medical care the child needs, eg, not suctioning frequently, missing feeds leading to poor weight gain/not achieving therapy milestones
- Missing health appointments/not engaging with health professionals/not following therapeutic care plans
- Restraining a child without knowing how to do so safely
- Using inappropriate kinds of discipline, such as withholding medication or food, restricting movement or removing essential equipment
- Using medication in a way that has not been medically advised
- Invasive procedures which are unnecessary/against a child's will
- Using badly fitting or inappropriate equipment which may cause pain or injury
- Poor hygiene and personal care arrangements



## How can you protect and support disabled and deaf children?

- Be familiar with and alert to the signs that a disabled child may be abused or neglected
- Explore causes/explanations of physical injuries that are attributed to the child's disability the injuries may be the result of abuse
- Help disabled and deaf children develop their communication skills in ways which are best for them
- Develop a good understanding of the needs of the individual child
- Develop a good understanding of the impact of language and cultural barriers including deaf culture
- Undertake multi-agency assessments which consider all the child's needs
- Build a chronology/picture of health issues to detect a history of neglect/lack of appropriate care, eg, a lot of hospital admissions, missed appointments, poor weight gain, missed immunisations
- Allow extra time that might be needed to seek out children's views and include them in assessments and planning
- Ensure parents are equipped with the right knowledge and skills to support and communicate with their children
- Demonstrate empathy and understanding of the impact on children of being disabled or deaf
- Promote disabled and deaf children's inclusion and participation in everyday life and mainstream activities
- Demonstrate understanding of the importance of disabled and deaf children building self-confidence and a positive identity
- Support children in managing their day to day lives and build their independence
- Investigate poor school attendance. Do not assume it is because of the level of health needs
- Identify problems early and help families get support