

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

If you are concerned that a disabled or deaf child is being abused or neglected you must make an immediate referral to: Islington's Children's Social Care Referral and Advice Team 0207 527 7400, cscreferrals@islington.gov.uk



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