



**Welcome** to this SCR practitioner briefing to help practitioners and their managers understand the key messages from a thematic serious case review (SCR). This SCR considered the themes of 'neglect' and 'disability' and both current and historical practice. It complements, and is published alongside, the 'Patrick SCR'.

### Who should read it?

Any practitioner and manager whose work brings them into contact with children, young people and their families. The messages are just as important for those working in adult services (where clients are parents or carers). The term 'children' includes children and young people up to 18 years of age.

### What was the aim of the thematic SCR and how was it carried out?

The over-arching aim of the SCR was to ascertain the quality of current professional recognition and response to disabled children where neglect may be a feature. We took a systemic approach that built on: an analysis of the emergent themes from the 'Patrick SCR'; the learning from a similar case and a multi-agency deep-dive audit of six current open cases of disabled children. Parent representatives and family members were invited to and contributed to the SCR. The report integrates the learning from SCRs published nationally, as well as the policy and evidence base for practice, with the local findings.



### What areas of good practice have been identified in the thematic SCR?



- ✚ We found evidence of better support, and also more authoritative challenge, to parents, carers and front-line practitioners than may have not been the case historically.
- ✚ Parents were being helped to understand, and address, practitioner concerns about neglect of their children.
- ✚ The engagement of fathers/father figures, as well as mothers, was evident. There was improved recognition and response to missed health appointments, as well as the impact of chaotic parenting and poor home conditions on the disabled child.
- ✚ In some of the cases we looked at, long-standing evidence of 'drift' was being tackled, in other cases there was evidence of good management of 'step-down' from child protection to child in need planning.
- ✚ We found some good evidence of joint working between agencies and improvements in transition arrangements to adult services.
- ✚ Good practice reflected a focus on the child's voice and their daily lived experiences as well as the integration of key historical information in practitioner assessment, service delivery, professional supervision and management oversight.

## What are the main areas for practice learning and improvement?



- ✚ We found evidence that the known barriers to identifying neglect in disabled children may have prevented recognition and a timely response to those in need of protection.
- ✚ Communication differences meant that the views of children were not always sought and limited evidence of their needs and wishes in their assessments and plans.
- ✚ Sometimes sympathy for parents and carers appeared to have prevented timely decision-making in the best interests of the child.
- ✚ More could be done to help parents of disabled children to access the services and support that they are likely to need. This includes a need to develop the role of Lead Professional to ensure joined-up working and provision of seamless care by the 'team around the child'.
- ✚ Whilst we noted some improvement in engaging fathers, as well as mothers, more needs to be done to embed this across all services.
- ✚ Where parents were receiving care from adult services (e.g. substance misuse services) we found limited evidence of these practitioners engaging with the care and protection needs of the children in the family.
- ✚ The tensions for all agencies between supporting disabled children and their families, and yet being open to child protection intervention, was clear in the history of some of the families.
- ✚ Assessments focused on the child's disability, which meant that issues, such as a failure to gain weight, were not recognised as potential indicators of neglect.
- ✚ Genograms (family trees) and chronologies of significant events were generally absent from the children's records; these should be considered as a routine part of high-quality safeguarding and child care practice.



There were, nevertheless, good examples of information sharing, but more could be done to promote collaborative multi-agency working in early help, children in need and child protection planning. Whilst we acknowledged that children's social care have the responsibility as a statutory

lead for safeguarding and child protection, they need the help of practitioners from other agencies in raising concerns directly with parents and carers and in contributing their unique sets of skills and knowledge to planning for their children's safety.

Successful safeguarding and child protection practice rests on 'doing the basics well' this includes holistic assessment; the routine use of genograms (family trees) and chronologies; good record keeping; information sharing; and the quality, management and timely distribution of meeting notes and plans.

## What can the BBSCB offer to support you in relation to neglect and disabled children?

- ✚ The [published the reports](#) are available on the BBSCB website. It has been written to be concise and accessible. We hope that you will read it in full.
- ✚ The references listed below are recommended as essential reading for those providing services to disabled children and their families:
  - ✚ Miller, D., Brown, J. (2014) *We have the right to be safe: protecting disabled children from abuse* London: NSPCC.
  - ✚ Murray, M., Osborne, C. (2009) *Safeguarding Disabled Children: Practice Guidance* London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.
  - ✚ Ofsted (2012) *Protecting Disabled Children: thematic inspection* London: Ofsted.

Our local data us telling us that neglect is a key feature in a high percentage of the children that local services are supporting. BBSCB are making it a priority area for improvement and will shortly be publishing a neglect strategy

Please go to the following page for both e-learning and face to face safeguarding training in respect of neglect and working with disabled children and young people;

<http://www.centralbedscpd.co.uk/safeguarding/cpd/default.asp?sid=>

Also visit our website [www.bedford.gov.uk/lscb](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/lscb) for more information.

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