

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Disabled children and young people have the same human rights as other children to be protected from harm and abuse and are equally entitled to achieve the "Staying Safe" outcome of Every Child Matters. Standard 8 of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services requires that Local Safeguarding Children Boards have a system in place to ensure that all disabled children are safeguarded from abuse and neglect

However due to a variety of factors, including greater vulnerability, the effective protection of disabled children and young people poses significant challenges to health, social care, education and voluntary/private sector providers. (NCB 2007).

- 1.2. In recognition of the risks outlined above and in order for Local Safeguarding Children's Board's (LSCB's) to meet Standard 8 of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, a resource outlining the key components of a safeguarding framework for disabled children and young people has been produced by the Council for Disabled Children. (2006): Safeguarding Disabled Children: a resource for local safeguarding children boards.

- 1.3. Within Section 2 of this guidance there is reference to the need for LSCB's to have mechanisms for enabling the Board to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children. These include:

- a working party or a sub group
- regular seminars or conferences; and
- consultative work with disabled children and adults

- 1.4. It is recommended that whatever mechanism is chosen, two key roles need to be undertaken:

- Checking that all initiatives, policies and procedures and training take into account the needs and circumstances of disabled children; and
- Initiating specific action to ensure disabled children are protected from harm and their welfare is promoted.

Both the above roles will be part of fulfilling the forthcoming Public Sector Duty for public bodies to take positive steps to promote equality of opportunity for disabled children and adults.

This takes account of information which outlines that there is an upward trend in the incidence of learning difficulties and/or disability and complex health needs amongst children and young people with the Bradford District (JAR Bradford Children's Services Authority Review 2008).

2. Bradford Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) - Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young people Sub Group

- 2.1. In order to take forward the recommendations outlined in 1.4 , the establishment of a time limited sub group of BSCB was agreed, with the focus of work on a) a review of recommendations within the guidance, b) identify, share and encourage good practice and c) identify (if necessary) what additional action and resources are required. It was agreed that a dual reporting system of the work of the subgroup would take place to both BSCB and Bradford Disabled Children and Young People Strategic Partnership (BDCYPSP). For the Sub Group Terms of Reference see Appendix 1.
- 2.2. The sub group included representatives from Children's Social Care Services, community and hospital-based health services, BSCB Child Protection Unit, Police, Education Bradford; VCS organisations (see Appendix 1). Whilst there was work undertaken to include the participation of disabled young people in the work of the group, the participation and their parents/carers proved to be far more challenging. Consequently there was limited access to the views of parents/carers as part of this process.
- 2.3. The Sub Group met on a monthly basis between November 2007 and April 2008. During this time the following tasks were completed:
 - 2.3.1. A review of the recommendations contained within Safeguarding Disabled Children: a Resource for Local Safeguarding Children Boards was undertaken. A self assessment audit was produced which was used to identify key information regarding the effectiveness of local safeguarding systems relating to disabled children and young people. This was circulated to Safeguarding leads on the BSCB, who were asked to provide details of representatives completing the audit within their agencies. Where possible the views of at least two front line managers and their staff from both mainstream and specialist (disability) services were sought. In total eleven out of eighteen audit requests were returned (Appendix 2), with additional discussion taking place with BSCB Sub Group's and external groups and events e.g. Special School Head Teachers group and NSPCC conference in March 2008.
 - 2.3.2. A review of the report produced by Barnardo's regarding the lessons to be learned from Child Protection concerns associated with Bradford Youth Service 'Our Fun Club' has been undertaken. This was presented to BSCB in Nov 2007, and the recommendations adopted as an Action Plan. The completed Action Plan was presented to BSCB on 19.03.08.

- 2.3.3. A copy of the Safeguarding Disabled Children: a Resource for Local Safeguarding Children Boards Guidance has been placed on the BSCB website. Discussion has taken place regarding the development of shared information for professionals (via BSCB website).

3. Self Assessment Audit

3.1. Features of an effective Safeguarding system for disabled children.

'Research evidence, and the experience of safeguarding disabled children, indicates that a number of features are key, if systems and processes are to effectively protect disabled children from harm' (*Section 2.3 of Safeguarding Disabled Children: a Resource for Local Safeguarding Children Boards*)

- 3.2. An adaptation of the features identified in the above guidance was used as the basis for the audit (Appendix 3). As part of this process agencies were asked to report on both where they felt that standards were met and where further action was required. Wherever possible agencies were asked to provide examples of good practice which could be shared in order to illustrate examples of the range of safeguarding activity in this area and promote organisational learning. In order to prepare this report reference has also been made to JAR (Bradford Children's Services Authority Review 2008) and Bradford Children's Plan 2007 – 2009.

- 3.3. The information gathered from this process was collated and used to identify 'emerging themes' which required further discussion and/or analysis and recommendations for further action.

3.4. Definition of Disability

For the purposes of this report the term disabled child and/or young person is defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Children Act 1989 (*P61 Section 6: Safeguarding Disabled Children: a Resource for Local Safeguarding Children Boards*).

4. Audit Overview

"Safeguards for disabled children are essentially the same as for non-disabled children. Particular attention should be paid to promoting high standards of practice and a high level of awareness of the risks of harm, and strengthening the capacity of children and families to help themselves."

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006.

- 4.1 The audit reports a clear view that the principles outlined above are shared by all agencies who responded to the audit process. This takes account of the increased vulnerability of disabled children and young people to harm and an awareness of the need for a robust, inclusive multi agency safeguarding framework which includes this group of children and young people.
- 4.2 The BSCB Disability Sub-Group has engaged in a detailed debate about whether there should be a separate safeguarding response for disabled children and whether this might serve to marginalise this group of children and young people by separating them off from mainstream services. From the discussion and consultation that has been carried out it is clear that safeguarding children in this sector does present specific challenges to agencies and practitioners.

Emerging Themes

5. Standard

There is a strong culture of consulting with and listening to disabled children amongst all services with whom they come into contact. All services make it easy for children to complain

- 5.1 The audit findings supported the view that whilst in general participation by young people across a range of settings and activities is increasing, disabled young people are less likely to be involved than their non disabled peers. The importance of promoting consultation with young disabled people regarding their views relating to services, personal support and encouraging robust complaints procedures is however clearly recognised. This needs to take into account the communication and access requirements of specific groups of disabled young people and outlines areas of good practice undertaken across a range of services.

Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust

Through two complaints regarding bathrooms on paediatric wards and disabled access and facility - both bathrooms have been completely refurbished to accommodate disabled children and young people. The families of the complainants were involved in helping to design the facility

Early Years and Child Care Service

In the last 12 months significant consultation with disabled children and young people has taken place as part of the Play Strategy review and the Childcare Sufficiency Plan.

Voluntary Sector

The Empowerment Group based at Barnardo's Seen and Heard have developed a drama performance on bullying and have had this made in to a DVD soon to be available with a learning resource pack for distribution across services to raise the profile of this issue for disabled children

- 5.2 The audit finding highlighted individual examples of agencies engaging young disabled people in discussion regarding what makes them feel safe (this included direct work as part of the audit undertaken with the Disability Peer Education Programme). In these circumstances young disabled people have provided clear messages regarding their concerns surrounding bullying etc. However, the audit also highlighted that there was a lack of consistency across agencies and sectors. The participation of disabled children/young people, their parents and carers from BME communities is particularly noted in this respect.
- 5.3 The majority of agencies identified the need for further work to be undertaken regarding the development of accessible and equitable complaints processes. Where monitoring information includes details regarding disability, it is noted that there is a low take up of complaints directly from disabled children and young people (this does not take account of parent/carer complaints).
- 5.4 The audit report clearly identified the need for investment in support for advocacy services for disabled young people, particularly for those young people with non verbal communication.

5.5 **Recommendations**

- 5.5.1 BSCB should support existing participation work undertaken with disabled children and young people and promote the voice of young disabled people and their parents/carers in the planning of services at a strategic level.
- 5.5.2 Monitoring of complaints from disabled children should take place across all agencies.
- 5.5.3 There is a need to audit advocacy provision for disabled young people across the district and where necessary expand and/or commission new advocacy services.

6 Standard

There is good communication and effective working relationships between and within agencies working with disabled children.

- 6.1 The BSCB Self Assessment Safeguarding Audit clearly found that staff in the different agencies were aware of and had access to Bradford Safeguarding Children Board's procedures and were aware of the process by which children are protected in Bradford; however there was less evidence that they related these procedures to disabled children.
- 6.2 The experience gained via the audit and its subsequent discussion in the sub-group illustrated that the sheer size of the organisations involved militated against a shared understanding of what constitutes

a clear threshold, where we move from children in need into safeguarding concerns and emphasised the need for a regular dialogue between agencies to maintain a shared understanding of the different agencies perceptions and priorities. The concept of **significant harm** is central to this debate.

Children's Social Care, Children's Complex Health or Disability Team reported that having a specified link person in the BSCB Child Protection Unit had proved useful in providing consultation and advice on specific cases involving disabled children and safeguarding concerns.

6.3 There are a number of factors that contribute to the threshold debate for safeguarding disabled children and the sub-group discussed a range of them, but it was generally agreed that further work is needed regarding an inter agency understanding surrounding threshold, referral and assessment arrangements. The audit and subsequent discussion highlighted the need for this work to include:

6.3.1 Discussion regarding the overall ownership and understanding of the Common Assessment Framework, the concept of lead professional and the new multi agency threshold document.

6.3.2 Recognition that there are a group of disabled young people who, whilst not meeting safeguarding threshold criteria and/or Section 17 support, remain vulnerable. There were a number of examples provided by agencies where it was felt that young people and their families were in danger of 'slipping through the net' regarding access to appropriate support services.

6.4 A recurring theme throughout the work of the sub-group was the centrality of multi-agency working and perspectives in order to deliver an effective service. There is an ongoing need for specialist knowledge and inter-agency consultation to clarify where a child's situation has moved into the area of significant harm and that the strategy discussion/meeting, required by Working Together 2006, is required to define and organise a Section 47 child protection enquiry. Concern has been identified in the audit that whilst policies and procedures are in place they are not always necessarily complied with.

6.5 **Recommendation**

There needs to be a regular multi-agency event to promote an understanding of the principles/guidance regarding safeguarding disabled children between agencies providing services to all children. In particular, it should provide a forum for staff that do not regularly work

with disabled children an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the issues of working in this area.

Note – an Inter-agency Practice Forum event has been planned for 16th September 2008 which will focus specifically on safeguarding disabled children. It is requested that BSCB support this as an inter-agency event.

7 Standard

Clarity of responsibility within children's social care for safeguarding and disabled children

Standard

Those receiving initial contact queries concerning disabled children are aware of safeguarding issues for disabled children

- 7.1 All new enquiries are received through the Children's Initial Contact Point (CICP). If the enquiry relates to a Child Protection issue, irrespective of whether the child or young person is disabled, the contact will be electronically transferred to the local area team. If the enquiry relates to a Section 17 Child in Need issue (CIN) relating to the disability or complex health issue, then the contact will be electronically transferred to the Children's Complex health or disability Team (CCHDT).
- 7.2 A protocol of working between the children's teams is in place. Area teams can consult with CCHDT and/or ask for a joint piece of work to support the allocated worker with specialist knowledge. Inevitably this arrangement can work well or may become a conflict about where responsibility for a piece of work lies. Services to Children & Young People have a working knowledge about this system but consultation is not often requested. The need for specific opportunities for this to occur, not necessarily on a specific case basis, is indicated. A regular professional's event, multi-agency by definition would be one way of beginning to ensure that the best use is made of the resources we have and that good professional links are made and maintained.

A social worker from the Children's Social Care, Children's Complex Health or Disability Team provided advice and consultation with a Community Resource Worker (CRW) from an area team who was completing a Needs Assessment for a young person with a learning disability and epilepsy. As the CRW had little knowledge about specialist services that were available, she asked the social worker to look at her assessment, advise her about services that would be suitable to meet the young person's needs and how she could go about obtaining such services. The young person is now receiving recreational experiences and has access to Short Breaks. This is not only giving her family a break from their caring roles but also providing the young person with the opportunity to increase her independence skills away from the home and school environment.

- 7.3 To aid the initial enquiry a contact needs to be as clear as possible about what the child's diagnosis is and what specific issues are being referred. Written guidance is in place to aid the CICP in deciding which team should receive the contact. Also CCHDT's Assessment team manager liaises with CICP to ensure dialogue is ongoing about appropriate contacts to the specialist team.
- 7.4 When Safeguarding issues arise in cases already allocated at CCHDT, the case remains in the specialist team. Social workers at CCHDT work with children & families in the same way as the area teams and manage cases with a Child Protection Plan and those subject to proceedings.

7.5 **Concerns raised in self assessment audit**

- 7.5.1 Whilst partner agencies seem to be clear that safeguarding concerns are dealt with by Children's Social Care, it is often unclear as to where the contact will be dealt with and what action will be taken. They often do not receive any feedback about where the case has been allocated or the outcome.
- 7.5.2 More generally there is some confusion reported by staff from across agencies regarding who they can approach within their own organisation for specialist (disabled children) safeguarding advice.
- 7.5.3 Disabled children tend to appear (across all agencies) to be seen as 'different' and should be dealt with in a 'different' way rather than being seen as children with additional needs whose investigations should follow the same processes. This could be related to worker's perceived lack of confidence, skill and ability in understanding 'disability' within its wider context.

7.6 **Recommendations**

- 7.6.1 Written guidelines and flow charts would be useful to aid understanding of the route and flow of referrals work through Services to Children & Young People. Basic Awareness training and single agency training needs to ensure that this is addressed.
- 7.6.2 There needs to be greater awareness regarding sources of specialist advice, both within Children's Social Care BSCB Child Protection Unit and single agencies. A link professional within each agency would be helpful in providing a point of advice and information when considering making a referral.

8 Standard

Resources (in the form of budgets, information and services) are available to meet the communication needs of disabled children

Standard

Adaptations to section 47 enquiries and police investigation procedures have been made in order to accommodate the specific needs and circumstances of disabled children

- 8.1 The audit reports a very clear view, from all agencies, that disabled children and young people with communication impairments and in particular those with non verbal communication, while being more vulnerable to abuse, have the least access to safeguarding systems.

Hearing the Child

Service provided from Hearing the Child Worker at Seen and Heard in assisting children with complex communication needs to have their views heard during section 47 investigations and complaints providing communication tools and resources specific to the child's need and acting as an intermediary and facilitating communication between the social worker and the children

- 8.2 A potential referrer needs to understand as clearly as possible what a child is trying to communicate to them especially where their communication is non-verbal. Those charged with enquiring into a safeguarding concern must make sure that they are best equipped to talk to the child using perhaps the skills and experience of workers already in contact with the child or utilising the most effective technical help and advice available. Services such as Speech and Language Therapy and specialist agencies such as Hearing the Child Service at Barnardo's and CAMHS are an essential resource in this respect; however there was a strong view supported by the majority of agencies that these services were under resourced.
- 8.3 The audit highlighted concerns expressed by the majority of agencies surrounding the assessment of some young disabled people as a credible witness within the Criminal Justice System. Information from West Yorkshire Police (WYP) highlighted this difficulty in relation to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) thresholds regarding the quality of evidence. In order to recommend charging in a criminal case the CPS has to be satisfied that evidence is of sufficient and robust quality to meet the burden of proof beyond reasonable doubt. Disabled children and young people who have difficulties in understanding/recall and whose primary form of communication is non verbal are sometimes not regarded as credible witnesses, because the quality of evidence is considered as unreliable. Feedback from special school head teachers and social care staff indicates that this has caused concern in relation to a number of cases regarding disabled children with the result that 'there

is a system which seems to discriminate against those in the most need'. In these circumstances it was felt that those without 'a voice' clearly have the most need of advocacy.

West Yorkshire Police are progressing a national initiative of using Independent Intermediaries who can facilitate communication, understanding and recall for even the most severely impaired children and young people, for example those who might communicate by moving only their eyes or hands

8.4 Recommendations

- 8.4.1 Reference should be made to support for advocacy support for disabled young people – reference to 5.5.3.
- 8.4.2 BSCB should support the work of the Disability Participation Champion Sub Group regarding the audit of communication resources/services for disabled children and young people across the district. This will include the development of a 'Communication Strategy' regarding disabled children who use non verbal communication.

9 Standard

Practitioners receive basic and advanced training on safeguarding and disabled children.

- 9.1 The audit identified that there was clarity across agencies regarding the importance of good safeguarding training as a key structure in supporting safeguarding disabled children.
- 9.2 It was identified that the Basic Awareness in Child Abuse and Neglect Training raised awareness of the increased vulnerability of disabled children to abuse, although information provided is basic.
- 9.3 The Safeguarding Board's multi agency training promotes interagency communication and learning regarding safeguarding disabled children and evaluation of this course has indicated that it is valued by participants and agencies. However this course runs only twice a year and places individual agencies are limited.
- 9.4 The audit identified that in relation to single agency training, a number of agencies include disability issues in their single agency safeguarding courses: however there isn't an agreed content and agencies address the subject in a variety of ways. It was felt that there needed to be further work undertaken regarding the identification of key principles which would provide the building blocks for this training.

- 9.5 Information gathered through the audit, discussions with agency groups and discussion within the strategy group, suggests further discussion is needed in relation to the following areas

Early Years & Child Care Service

EYCS For all frontline staff Child Protection Policies and Procedures are part of their induction and basic child protection training is an essential. The increased vulnerability of disabled children and young people are highlighted in this training.

This training is also offered to service providers through the EYCS Training Prospectus, which also contains course on Health & Safety, Inclusive Play.

- 9.6 The need for further training of staff, particularly those staff who do not have experience of direct work with disabled children to access specialist training has been highlighted. This would support confidence building and support a greater awareness across the children's workforce regarding 'disability' within a wider context.

Delivery of Child Protection/Child Safety awareness training to a group of hearing impaired staff who work with young people. This was undertaken by the BSCB Training Co-ordinator and VCS Safeguarding Development worker as part of Bradford Deaf Film Festival. This included the use of a BSL signer.

- 9.7 The lack of resources within agencies to implement training was consistently highlighted and it was felt that an audit of training needs across agencies in Bradford would be helpful. The BSCB Training Sub-Group could have a role in looking at training regarding disabled children and young people, although such a task could not be undertaken without baseline data. Contact should be made with the Inter-Agency Workforce Group with clear recommendations about the core competences of Children's workforce workers.

9.8 Recommendations

- 9.8.1 *Safeguarding Disabled Children: A Resource for Local Safeguarding Children Boards* is recognised as a good practical document, which should be used within staff induction.
- 9.8.2 Further discussion is to take place within the BSCB Training sub Group regarding an audit of safeguarding disabled children training. This to include links with the Inter-Agency Workforce Group.
- 9.8.3 Single agencies need to ensure disability issues are addressed in their safeguarding courses. Discussion within the BSCB Training sub Group regarding the development of an agreed common content in respect of disability would support this process.

10 Support for staff

- 10.1 Information gathered through the audit, discussion within agency groups and the safeguarding disabled children sub group, highlighted the support needs of staff working with disabled children and young people. Some agencies identified staff as being more vulnerable to allegations of abuse because of the level of physical support/ intervention needed by some children and young people and because a child or young person's learning difficulties may cause misinterpretation of action taken by staff. Head teachers of special schools identified that present 'codes of conduct' do not take into account disabled children and young people.

Branshaw Special School have developed a 'Safe Touch' policy

This recognises that physical contact with children and young people within the school needs to take place as part of their educational/personal care. In order to clarify and support the work of all practitioners in school, the guidance outlines where forms of physical contact are likely to occur and how this should be managed. Staff have reported that they have found this supportive and useful.

10.2 Recommendations

- 10.2.1 Dissemination of good practice and information regarding the development of a Code of Conduct in line with DCSF guidance (**Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People**) for staff working with children and young people.
- 10.2.2 The BSCB to consider support the development of a BSCB website resource signposting staff to available professional guidance and practice support

11 A strategic approach is taken to the provision of sex education and safeguarding work with disabled children and young people

- 11.1 Through national research (Sex Education Forum 2004) and multi agency discussion at Bradford District level, it is acknowledged that there are significant variations in the level of advice, support and services regarding sex and relationship education (SRE) which is available to the general population of young people compared to that which is available to young people with a learning disability. The issues are complex and emotive, and standard approaches often do not work as this ignores the specific learning needs of this group of young people.
- 11.2 Feedback from the self assessment audit and multi agency discussion regarding SRE provision for disabled young people indicates that SRE provision is regularly reviewed with teachers, school governors and at planned parents' evenings. It has been observed that the standard of

SRE and the quality of materials available are improving and that schools are introducing SRE earlier, particularly if there are concerns surrounding problematic sexual behaviour. However one of the main concerns expressed by schools is that staff are working in relative (interagency and professional) isolation regarding SRE and disabled young people, and that staff need access to identified specialist advice and support regarding SRE programmes and concerns regarding individual pupil's vulnerability and/or problematic sexual behaviour. This is particularly important in relation to the latter given the risks associated with the young people's potential vulnerability to abuse and in some cases entry into the criminal justice system. A review of 'Our Fun Club' (BSCB Nov 2007) highlighted the isolation staff experienced in this area.

Parent Training Programme

The delivery of the fpa Speakeasy Programme (designed to enable parents to gain knowledge, confidence and skills to enable them to be able to talk positively with their children about sex and relationship issues) will be delivered to a group of parents of disabled children. This will be undertaken as a partnership between Bradford and Airedale tPCT and Barnardo's Queens Road Parenting Support Service

11.3 Recommendations

There is specific work required in consultation with young people, their parents/carers and agencies regarding SRE provision in order to:

- 11.3.1 Identify best practice (nationally/locally) and audit SRE provision for disabled children and young people across the district.
- 11.3.2 Additional training should support workers' understanding of SRE and disabled young people. A resource list of agencies providing specialist advice regarding SRE and disabled young people should be compiled in order to support this process.

12 Standard

There is consistent recording of disabled children and their needs at each stage of the safeguarding process, including information gathering.

12.1 Information gathering

Through the audit report it is clear that there is inadequate information about the size, nature and ethnicity of the population of disabled children in Bradford with the concomitant concern that a number of children are not receiving a service because there is little knowledge regarding where they are and what support they require

(where necessary). The audit return from Bradford District Care Trust emphasised this point.

- 12.2 There remains a lack of clarity regarding the data collection procedures relating to disabled children who are the subject of safeguarding concerns. Within this context the audit has highlighted the need for an increase in the level of sophistication regarding data collection and analysis which is outcome focussed. Work towards robust data gathering and dissemination regarding the numbers and ethnicity of disabled children who are subject to safeguarding concerns and/or have been the subject of a serious case review, would be a helpful first step for BSCB in undertaking this process.

Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust

Whilst there are good policies in place we have concentrated over the past 12 – 18 months in ensuring training was available and undertaken by all staff at the relevant level. This has been achieved.

We now are concentrating upon the notification infrastructure and using audit to identify deficits

- 12.3 In this respect there is a degree of optimism with the switchover to Bradford's new Integrated Children's System, which explicitly captures information relating to disabled children to allow for a more accurate assessment of the needs of this group of children. This will be strengthened further by the collation and dissemination of Children in Need Census (CIN) information within Children's Social Care. It is also recognised that work is currently underway through the 'Aiming High' programme in order to capture more accurate baseline data regarding the numbers of disabled children living within the district.

12.4 Recommendations

- 12.4.1 The BSCB Performance Management, Audit and Evaluation Sub Group and Disabled Children and Young Peoples Strategy Group to discuss audit information. This is to include recommendations regarding how the outcome in point 12.2 can best be achieved.

13 BSCB Sub Groups

- 13.1 Discussion and feedback from a sample of Sub Group Chairs has indicated that there are differing views regarding how well the needs of disabled children and young people were accounted for in the work of the Board Sub Groups. This included conclusions which ranged from 'not as well as we should' to 'addressed appropriately'.

Approaches differed regarding how the specific needs of this group of young people could be identified and promoted, for example, one sub group has a disabled children's champion. Some Sub Group Chair's felt that there needed to be a much more inclusive approach to this process i.e. encouraging all sub group participants to take account of safeguarding all vulnerable groups.

13.2 Recommendation

13.2.1 This audit report should be shared with BSCB Sub Groups in order to develop a shared approach regarding the inclusion of disabled children and young people in the work of the sub groups.

14 Conclusion

- 14.1 Whilst taking into account the limitations of this audit process, the audit reports a clear view from all the participating agencies which supports the right of disabled children for protection from abuse and exploitation which is no different from that of the broader population of children. This takes account of the increased vulnerability of disabled children and young people to harm and an awareness of the need for a robust, inclusive multi agency safeguarding framework which supports this group of children and young people.
- 14.2 There was evidence from the audit of good safeguarding practice within single and joint agency responses to safeguarding concerns relating to disabled children. It is equally clear however; from the discussion and consultation that has been carried out, that safeguarding disabled children and young people does present significant challenges to agencies and practitioners across the Bradford District. This is reflected more broadly in the recent publication of the Staying Safe Action Plan (DCSF 2008) which recognises that the need for safeguarding disabled children and young people should be more strongly reflected in the Staying Safe strategy (DCSF 2008 p 42).
- 14.3 In response to the BSCB audit findings and guidance from the Staying Safe Action Plan, a number of key areas have been identified which will require further discussion and planning by BSCB/DCYPSG. As part of this the importance of the participation of disabled young people and their parents/carers in the design of services and strategic planning is acknowledged as a key underpinning principle.

15 Recommendations

The following recommendations reflect the conclusions agreed by the Safeguarding Disabled Children Sub Group regarding each of the key emerging themes:

- 15.1 There needs to be a regular multi-agency event to promote an understanding of safeguarding disabled children between agencies providing services to all children. In particular, it should provide a forum for staff that do not regularly work with disabled children an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the issues of working in this area.

Note – an Inter-agency Practice Forum event has been planned for 16th September 2008 which will focus specifically on safeguarding disabled children. It is requested that BSCB support this as an inter-agency event.

- 15.2 Without specific championing the needs of disabled children tend to get lost between the competing agency agendas and priorities. The BSCB needs to consider how it continues the work of the sub-group either by extending the life of the current group or designating specific champions throughout the Board's sub groups to promote effective responses for disabled children.

There is a strong culture of consulting with and listening to disabled children amongst all services with whom they come into contact. All services make it easy for children to complain

- 15.3 BSCB should support existing participation work undertaken with disabled children and young people and promote the voice of young disabled people and their parents/carers in the planning of services at a strategic level.
- 15.4 BSCB should recommend the monitoring of complaints from disabled children to take place across all services for children.
- 15.5 There is a need to audit advocacy provision for disabled young people across the district and where necessary expand and/or commission new advocacy services.

Clarity of responsibility within children's social care for safeguarding and disabled children

Those receiving initial contact queries concerning disabled children are aware of safeguarding issues for disabled children

- 15.6 Written guidelines and flow charts would be useful to aid understanding of the route and flow of referrals work through Services to Children & Young People.

Basic Awareness training and single agency training needs to ensure that this is addressed.

- 15.7 There needs to be greater awareness regarding sources of specialist advice, both within Children's Social Care, BSCB Child Protection Unit and single agencies. A link professional within each agency would be helpful in providing a point of advice and information when considering making a referral.

Standard

Resources (in the form of budgets, information and services) are available to meet the communication needs of disabled children

Adaptations to section 47 enquiries and police investigation procedures have been made in order to accommodate the specific needs and circumstances of disabled children

- 15.8 BSCB should support the work of the Disability Participation Champion Sub Group regarding the audit of communication resources/services for disabled children and young people across the district. This will include the development of a 'communication strategy' regarding disabled children who use non verbal communication.

Practitioners receive basic and advanced training on safeguarding and disabled children

- 15.9 *Safeguarding Disabled Children: A Resource for Local Safeguarding Children Boards*, is recognised as a good practical document, which should be used within staff induction.

- 15.10 Further discussion is to take place within the BSCB Training sub Group regarding an audit of safeguarding disabled children training. This to include links with the Inter-Agency Workforce Group

- 15.11 Single agencies need to ensure disability issues are addressed in their safeguarding courses. Discussion within the BSCB Training sub Group regarding the development of an agreed common content in respect of disability would support this process.

15.12 Support for Staff

BSCB to develop a web resource advising staff about available professional guidance and practice support regarding work with disabled children.

- 15.13 Dissemination of good practice and information regarding the development of a Code of Conduct for staff working with disabled children and young people.

A strategic approach is taken to the provision of sex education and safeguarding work with disabled children and young people

- 15.14 There is specific work required in consultation with young people, their parents/carers and agencies regarding SRE provision in order to identify best practice (nationally/locally) and audit SRE provision for disabled children and young people across the district.
- 15.15 Additional training should support workers' understanding of SRE and disabled young people. A resource list of agencies providing specialist advice regarding SRE and disabled young people should be compiled in order to support this process.

There is consistent recording of disabled children and their needs at each stage of the safeguarding process, including information gathering.

- 15.16 The BSCB Performance Management, Audit and Evaluation Sub Group and Disabled Children and Young Peoples Strategy Group to discuss audit information. This is to include recommendations regarding how the outcome in 12.2 can best be achieved.

15.17 BSCB Sub Groups

This audit report should be shared with BSCB Sub Groups in order to develop a shared approach regarding the inclusion of disabled children and young people in the work of the sub groups.

- 15.18 Further work should be considered regarding the following:

Staying Safe Action Plan DCSF (2008)

To respond to concerns raised in the consultation and provide better protection for disabled children and young people, the following will be undertaken:

- Launch new practice guidance on safeguarding disabled children, in line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children*;
- Publish guidance in Spring 2008 to help schools tackle the bullying of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities;
- Publish guidance in Spring 2008 for health professionals on transition which includes a reference to personal safety in a self-assessment tool for young people;
- The needs of disabled children will be covered in the new guidance on tackling bullying outside school;
- Expectation that there will be development of parents' forums in all areas shaping local services for disabled children.

References

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council. **Children and Young Peoples Plan 2006 - 2009**

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) **Staying Safe: Action Plan**

Department for Education and Skills (2006) **Safeguarding Disabled Children: A resource for local safeguarding Children Boards**. London. Council for Disabled Children.

Department of Health, Home Office, Department for Education and Employment (2006) **Working Together to Safeguard Children**. London: The Stationery Office

HM Treasury, Department for Education and Skills (2007) **Aiming high for disabled children: better support for families**. London HM Treasury

Ofsted Joint Area Review. Bradford Children's Services Authority Area 3 June 2008

Appendix 1

BSCB Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young People - Self Assessment Audit

Safeguarding Disabled Children & Young People Sub – Group

Membership:

Chair	Dave Benn
Braithwaite Special School	TBC
Bradford & Airedale tPCT	Sue Bottomley
Children's Social Care	Jill Craven
Respite Services	Cath Dew
Seen and Heard	Shannon Gibbon
CSRU (Child Protection)	Frank Hand
Legal Services	Kerry Mosley
Early Years and Childcare Service	Andy Parkin
NSPCC	Shazia Rafiq
CSRU (Independent Reviewing)	Derek Ruddick
Youth Service	Pete Sims
Bradford Hospitals	Dr Sims
West Yorkshire Police	DI Chris Stones
Health	Jill Tunstall
Bradford Education	Dominic Wall
Education	Jenni Whitehead
Consultant Paediatrician	Dr Wildig

As at November 2007

NB All sub-groups can co-opt members to assist with the business of BSCB.

Terms of Reference:

- To contribute to BSCB annual report regarding the effectiveness of the BSCB in co-ordinating local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of disabled children and young people.
- To consider and report to the full Board on BSCB progress in relation to relevant parts of the Bradford Children and Young People's Plan, BSCB Strategic Plan and other relevant guidance and plans.
- To ensure that the Chair of the BSCB is promptly informed of any significant concerns relating to practice in the District in the field of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of disabled children and young people.
- To contribute and work to the BSCB business plan and annual report.
- To produce a report, including recommendations at the conclusion of the Sub-Group's work.
- To contribute to the review and development of inter- and single agency procedures, guidance and training.

- To develop mechanisms to ensure that parents and children can participate.

Outcomes:

- To ensure that the BSCB Board audits the work of the Sub-Groups to determine that the needs of disabled children and young people are accounted for in the work of the Board Sub-Groups.
- To make parents of disabled children and young people more aware of safeguarding procedures.
- To produce a summary of guidance based on Working Together and Safeguarding Procedures for Disabled Children and Young People, for use by professionals in the Bradford District and to contribute to the work of effective practice.
- To heighten the profile of safeguarding across the District with agencies, parents and young people, emphasising the use of the BSCB website and to develop better communication with parents.
- To produce a report including recommendations to enable the Board and its member agencies to develop action plans to be audited by the Performance Management, Audit and Evaluation Sub-Group.

Frequency of Meetings: Normally monthly, and as required by BSCB.

Appendix 2

BSCB Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young People - Self Assessment Audit

Agency Returns

West Yorkshire Police	✓
Education Bradford	✓
Airedale NHS Trust	✓
Bradford District Care Trust	✓
Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	✓
Assistant Director, Children's Social Care Services, City of Bradford MDC, Children's Services	✓
Bradford Early Years and Childcare Service, City of Bradford MDC. Children's Services	✓
Assistant Director, Locality Working, City of Bradford MDC, Children's Services Bradford Youth Service	✓
Bradford Adult Social Care	✓
NSPCC	✓
Voluntary Sector	✓

Appendix 3

BSCB Safeguarding Disabled Children and Young People - Self Assessment Audit

Features of an effective Safeguarding system for disabled children.

Research evidence, and the experience of safeguarding disabled children, indicates that a number of features are key if systems and processes are to effectively protect disabled children from harm. The following features could be used as a checklist by LSCBs to assess the effectiveness of local safeguarding systems

1. Clarity of responsibility within children's social care for safeguarding and disabled children
2. There is good communication and effective working relationships between and within agencies working with disabled children
3. Those receiving initial contact queries¹¹ concerning disabled children are aware of safeguarding issues for disabled children
4. Practitioners receive basic and advanced training on safeguarding and disabled children
5. Practitioners have access to specialist advice and support which can be called on when an assessment involves a disabled child. Resources (in the form of budgets, information and services) are available to meet the communication needs of disabled children
6. There is a strong culture of consulting with and listening to disabled children amongst all services with whom they come into contact. All services make it easy for children to complain
7. Parents are supported to provide the best care possible for their child
8. There are good working and strategic relationships between children's and adults' services
9. Services for disabled children have guidelines, and provide staff training, on safeguarding issues for disabled children. There are also clear guidelines on, and awareness of, safeguarding procedures
10. There has been investment in emergency placement provision for disabled children

11. Adaptations to section 47 enquiries and police investigation procedures have been made in order to accommodate the specific needs and circumstances of disabled children
12. There are clear procedures for specific circumstances where disabled children may be particularly vulnerable

Some disabled children are in settings or have particular experiences which make them especially vulnerable. It will be important to have clear procedures and policies to ensure their welfare is safeguarded.

- ***Disabled children cared for in residential settings***
- ***Disabled children in health care settings***
- ***When a young person moves into adult services***
- ***Disabled young people in Young Offender Institutions***
- ***Disabled young people who are accused of abuse***

13. There is consistent recording of disabled children and their needs at each stage of the safeguarding process
14. Case audits are used to monitor whether procedures are working well and also to share skills and problem solve
15. A strategic approach is taken to the provision of sex education and safeguarding work with disabled children and young people