

SAFEGUARDING CHALLENGES FOR SLCN

Understanding vulnerability in children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

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bringing safeguarding to life 

WHY ARE CHILDREN WITH SLCN MORE VULNERABLE?

Children with SLCN may:

- Struggle to understand safeguarding messages
- Misinterpret adult intentions or peer behaviours
- Find it difficult to disclose abuse or harm
- Have reduced access to advocacy and voice
- Be at increased risk of exploitation
- Experience child-on-child abuse

SAFEGUARDING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Key communication challenges include:

- Complex or abstract language in safeguarding materials
- Fast-paced verbal explanations
- Limited opportunities to ask clarifying questions
- Assumptions that understanding equals agreement
- Children may appear compliant without fully understanding

IMPACT ON DISCLOSURE

Children with SLCN may:

- Lack vocabulary to describe harm
- Struggle to sequence events clearly
- Provide inconsistent accounts due to language processing difficulties
- Withdraw instead of verbally reporting concerns
- This can delay identification of safeguarding issues

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

To improve safeguarding for children with SLCN:

- Use clear, simple, concrete language
- Incorporate visual supports and repetition
- Allow extra processing time
- Check understanding regularly
- Ensure access to advocacy support
- Train staff in communication-aware safeguarding practice
