



**Scotland's
health**

Supporting parents with a learning disability

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Being 'good enough'?

- When provided with appropriate support, many parents with a learning disability can improve their skills, knowledge and learn to parent more effectively
- BUT an estimated 40% to 60% of parents with learning disabilities have their children removed as a result of being assessed as not meeting a satisfactory standard of parenting
- Why?



Being 'good enough'?

- Good enough is being able to provide:
 - Basic physical care, love and affection
 - Security, guidance and boundaries
 - Age appropriate responsibility and guidance
- Some parents with learning disabilities may need help to develop their parenting skills in order to:
 - Provide a safe home environment, adequate nutrition and nurturing interactions
 - Recognise and treat medical emergencies
 - Have a basic understanding of child development



How might domestic abuse impact on a mother's ability to be good enough?

- Physical and mental health impact
- Unable to meet the child's emotional needs due to the impact of the perpetrator's actions
- Confidence in parenting skills and authority undermined
- Coping through alcohol or drug use
- Fear involving support services will result in the child being removed



Domestic abuse and learning disability

- Women with learning disabilities experience the same types of physical, sexual and psychological abuse as other women
- More likely to experience abuse than non-disabled women
- Period of abuse tends to last longer before getting support
- More likely to continue to experience abuse after support



How could domestic abuse impact on a mother with learning disabilities ability to be good enough?

What additional issues or attitudes might mothers with learning disabilities who experience abuse come up against?



Barriers to seeking support

- Poor access to sexual health and relationship education to identify abusive behaviour
- Not informed of their rights and the laws and services available to protect against abuse
- Reliance on the perpetrator for support and care
- Fear of child being removed from the family
- Fear of being alone



Barriers to receiving support

- Lack of specialist services and information on services
- Staff skills, knowledge and confidence
- Undiagnosed learning disabilities or being deemed not to have met the threshold to access statutory services...
- Leading to crisis rather than early interventions
- Changes to the level of support provided after different child development stages



Supporting the parent and child

- If the non-abusing parent isn't safe, it is unlikely that the child will be.
- Focus on early identification, assessment and intervention.
- See the perpetrator's behaviour as the cause of child concerns
- Recognise the non-abusing parent's actions to protect their child
- Join up the decision making process for adult and child safeguarding concerns



- What are the challenges or successes in your area to supporting parents with learning disabilities who have experienced abuse?
- How can we overcome or embed these?
- Priority areas for action?