

7-Minute Briefing

Safeguarding Children with Asthma is Everyone's Responsibility

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1 Background information

Asthma is the most common long-term medical condition in children in the UK, with around 1 in 11 children and young people living with asthma. The UK has one of the highest prevalence, emergency admission and death rates for childhood asthma in Europe.

Outcomes are worse for children and young people living in the most deprived areas. Asthma is a long-term condition but can be incorrectly perceived as a mild disease and research shows that it is often not taken seriously enough.

If a child is in immediate danger - call 999

2 Background information

A study showed that 1 in 6 people in the UK do not know the condition can be fatal. Everyone who works with children – including teachers, GPs, nurses, midwives, health visitors, school nurses, family support practitioners, early years professionals, youth workers, police, A&E staff, paediatricians, voluntary and community workers and social workers – ALL have a responsibility for keeping them safe.

Watch [Managing Asthma in Children](#), produced by Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Trust on YouTube



3 Types of inhalers

Blue reliever inhalers do not treat asthma itself but simply relieve symptoms. Overuse of blue reliever inhalers is a marker of asthma risk. Historically, reliever inhalers were easily identified because they were blue, however nowadays other coloured inhalers may also be relievers. These inhalers have a dual role – relieving symptoms and treating asthma. Expect to see more children using these inhalers in the future.

Indicators of suboptimal asthma control:

- Using their reliever more than twice per week.

4 Indicators of medical neglect

- Frequent attendances for emergency asthma care, but not being brought to their asthma review appointments
- Evidence / suspected poor adherence with the prescribed medication plan which could result in harm to the child.
- Poor attendance at school due to asthma.

Signpost the family to request an asthma review with either their GP or nurse.

Concerned about a child:

Multi-agency referral form [EMARF - City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

5 Key messages and red flags

Housing: Poor quality housing is strongly associated with asthma morbidity. Key drivers include homes with damp, mould, poor air quality, cold homes due to fuel poverty, warm homes due to poor ventilation or homes which are overcrowded can impact on asthma control. Registered providers are required to promptly address damp and mould in homes they own. See Awaab's Law Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Exposure to tobacco smoke and poor outdoor air quality are also strongly associated with asthma morbidity.

Health Care: There is a risk of severe or life-threatening asthma attacks for children who: 1. Frequently attend hospital or out of hours for emergency care of their asthma and/or are not brought for their asthma reviews; 2. Children who are requiring three or more reliever inhalers in 12 months; 3. Children who have evidence of poor adherence with their preventative medication; These can all be an indication of child medical neglect.

6 Key messages and red flags

Social Care: Professionals need to be aware of the correlation between poor parental management of chronic health conditions such as asthma and wider childhood neglect.

Early Years and Childcare: Children who have poor attendance and/or need their reliever inhaler more than twice a week could have poorly controlled asthma.

Education: Children with asthma should be able to fully participate with school activity. Poor attendance at school can indicate poor asthma control. Children should have an asthma management plan with access to their reliever inhaler at school. Children using their reliever inhaler more than twice a week or waking at night due to asthma once a week or more can indicate suboptimal asthma control. [All schools should be Asthma Friendly.](#)

7 Resources and eLearning

The National Capabilities Framework for any Professional involved in the care of CYP with Asthma is hosted on the CYP asthma eLfh (eLearning for Healthcare) landing page alongside training modules aligned to each tier of the framework: [Asthma \(Children and young people\) - eLearning for healthcare](#)

All professionals working with children should have a good understanding of asthma and complete the training recommended in the capability framework.

[Black Country CDOP Learning Briefing](#)