

Launch of revised pan Sussex Procedure

8.20 Fabricated or induced illness (FII) and Perplexing Presentations (including FII by carers)

Fabricated or induced illness, FII, is a term and situation well known to professionals with potentially serious and harmful impacts on children, including deliberately induced illness and even death.

What is perhaps less well recognised, but far more common, are 'perplexing presentations' (PP). Perplexing Presentations typically involve verbal accounts and descriptions by the carer, rather than deliberate deception and fabrication.

These perplexing presentations may be secondary to high levels of parent/carer anxiety about their child's health, misunderstanding of health information, or inappropriate beliefs or expectations about their child's health and development.

Both FII and PP include a wide range of possible presentations and some cases can be considered as being on a continuum.

The common starting point for PP and FII is that the child's clinical presentation is not adequately explained by any confirmed illness, and the situation is impacting upon the child's health or social wellbeing. Therefore although health information is important, both FII and PP are very much multi-agency/multidisciplinary issues that require effective communication, coordination, sharing of information and clarity of professional roles.

The timescale for managing these cases will depend upon the level of concern and extent of impact on the child's health. Where possible the timing of meetings should be based around the availability of key health professionals, in particular the child's paediatrician and GP.

The initial approach to both FII and PP is to establish which, if any, symptoms or conditions are genuine and importantly what the implications of any genuine or falsely reported conditions are. Children with many medical conditions, although debilitating, can lead a normal or relatively normal life and the advice of health professionals/paediatricians is vital to confirm what a child can and cannot do.

Consultation with the child's paediatrician(s)/clinician(s) and consideration of the child's lived experience as well as the family/social and educational context are vital. It is important to have an understanding of the complex nature of these cases and many cases require sensitive management, experienced practitioners and time allowed to improve the outcome for children.

The guidelines for FII are clear and practitioners must follow local and national guidance to manage cases safely. It is hoped that the inclusion of Perplexing Presentations within this guidance will help professionals from all agencies have a better understanding and manage these cases in a coordinated and effective way. You can read the full guidance [HERE](#).

Training to support professionals in this area is in development.