



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

What Happens if Someone has Concerns About Your Child?

Information for patients



Everyone shares a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm

Sometimes, people may be concerned that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer:

- physical injury (e.g. being hit or kicked)
- physical neglect (e.g. not being fed or clothed properly)
- sexual abuse (e.g. sexual assault, exposure to sexual behaviour or language)
- emotional abuse (e.g. constant criticism, being ignored or humiliated).

If someone thinks a child may be at risk, they have a duty to report this to:

- Children's Social Care (formerly 'Social Services')
- the Police
- other professionals involved with the family, e.g. health visitors, teachers.

If Children's Social Care thinks a child has been harmed, or may be harmed, they have a legal duty to investigate (Section 47 of the Children Act 1989).

What happens if someone reports their concerns?

A Children's Social Worker will try to find out why someone has reported concerns about your child.

The social worker will usually:

- speak to you
- speak to your child, if they agree, and maybe other children in your family
- ask your permission to speak to your child; however, we are able to take legal advice if you do not give it
- speak to other people, such as relatives, teachers, doctors or health visitors
- take action if necessary, such as speaking to the Police or visiting your home.

If Children's Social Care feels it is not necessary to take action, the investigation will stop and the matter will be closed; they will tell you this has happened.

If you need support, or advice about caring for your family, Children's Social Care can give you details of people who can help.

What happens if it is necessary to take action?

If it is necessary to take action there will be a 'Strategy Discussion' between Children's Social Care, the Police and other professionals involved; this is where a Plan will be made to keep your child(ren) safe.

As part of the Plan it may be necessary to:

- interview your child
- ask a doctor to examine your child(ren).

Your child's interview

Children's Social Care may ask your permission to interview your child on video; this can be used later as evidence in a court. **They can only interview your child if they agree to be interviewed.** This interview is to help us find out what has happened to your child, and will take place in a friendly and comfortable environment, at a pace that suits them.

Your child's medical examination

If your child is injured, or shows signs of serious neglect or assault, Children's Social Care may have to arrange for a doctor to examine them. This is usually a doctor who specialises in caring for children (a 'paediatrician') and/or a Police doctor. Sometimes, all siblings in a family are examined.

The examination is to find out if they have injuries, and if they need treatment. It can help to show how the injuries have been caused, and be used to collect evidence.

Children's Social Care will ask your permission first, and you will usually be able to be present during their examination. (It is best if you do give permission, as they are able to seek a court order if you do not.)

If your child is thought mature enough, they can give permission for their medical examination without your agreement.

Removal from home

In most cases children and young people continue to live with their families during an investigation, so long as we think they are safe.

If there are concerns that a child is not safe, it may be arranged for them to live somewhere else, for example with a relative, friend or foster carer.

Unless there is a court order, a child cannot be removed from their home without your agreement.

If the Police believe that your child is in serious danger, they can move them to a 'safe place' for up to 72 hours without your agreement; this may be with a relative, friend or foster carer. Within a few days of your child being removed you will have the chance to put your case to the court.

If an adult, parent or carer in your home is being investigated, they may be asked to leave the home while the investigation takes place. This is a voluntary arrangement to make things easier for the child involved. It will also depend on whether there are other carers at home who can protect the child if necessary.

After the investigation

When the investigation is complete, the following things may happen:

- Children's Social Care and the Police may decide they do not need to be involved.
- You may be given support and advice, or details of organisations which can help.
- A 'Child Protection Case Conference', or another meeting, may be held to decide if more action is needed: this may include an application to the court for an order under the Children Act 1989.
- Arrangements may be made for your child to live with a relative, friend or foster carer.

If abuse of a child or young person is confirmed, the Police will trace and interview the person believed to be responsible. They will tell you the outcome.

Your child's rights and your rights

Your child has a right to:

- be heard and taken seriously
- have their views and feelings considered
- be protected
- be supported
- ask for explanations
- complain (please see www.ouh.nhs.uk/complaints)
- be kept informed and involved, according to their age/understanding
- appropriate confidentiality.

You have a right to:

- be heard
- be kept informed and involved
- be supported
- seek independent legal advice
- ask for explanations
- complain (please see www.ouh.nhs.uk/complaints)
- appropriate confidentiality
- an interpreter if needed
- have your cultural/religious background considered.

For further information please contact the Safeguarding Children Team: **01865 223 196**

What to do if you are unhappy with the service provided

Please speak to the staff working with you, or their manager, in the first instance.

If they are unable to address your concern, you can contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on: 01865 221 473 Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm, or email: palsjr@ouh.nhs.uk

To make a complaint, please email: complaints@ouh.nhs.uk

Oxford University Hospitals follows the procedures set out by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board: www.oscb.org.uk

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Tracy Toohey
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