

What happens when your child needs a Child Protection Medical Assessment?

Information for patients and carers

We understand that you may be concerned about this process - we will try our best to explain everything and listen to any concerns you or your child/ren may have.

This leaflet explains the Child Protection Medical Assessment process we follow to ensure that children are kept safe where there are concerns around possible neglect or abuse. Please be aware that attending the Child Protection Medical Assessment does not mean that a child has definitely been abused. Following the Assessment, it may be concluded that there are no concerns about possible neglect or abuse. You will be kept informed throughout the process.

Because safeguarding is a legal process, it is very important that you understand what we are doing and why, so please ask questions - we are all here to help.

1. What is our responsibility for safeguarding children?

1.1 All healthcare practitioners have legal duties to promote the health and welfare of all children to make sure they grow up happy and healthy. Their duties include working with colleagues in the Police and Children's Social Care to protect children under 18 from the risk of harm.

1.2 If there is a concern about the possible safety and welfare of your child, the multi-agency procedures set out by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships of North Yorkshire and the City of York will be followed. Each of our hospitals also has its own clear policies and procedures for keeping children safe and responding to any concerns about children's welfare.

1.3 You have been asked to bring your child to the hospital because there are concerns that your child may have suffered harm. The role of the paediatric (children's medical and nursing) team is to work out if there is a reason for the concerns, and if that worry can be resolved or treated by asking you and other agencies for help. The team will also support your child with any necessary medical treatment.

1.4 Sometimes it is also necessary to ask for a child's brothers or sisters to also have an Assessment – again, this will be explained to you.

2. Working in partnership to safeguard your child

2.1 We understand that it is upsetting to have concerns raised about your child's safety and wellbeing. The paediatric team and colleagues from other agencies will always try to work closely with parents and carers to offer support at this difficult time.

2.1 We ask that you work with medical and nursing staff, and the other agencies involved, in the best interests of your child.

3. Consent

3.1 You will be asked to confirm that you have legal responsibility for your child, and then to agree (consent) to any medical assessments which may be necessary. The paediatric team will make sure you understand what is happening with each process and why.

3.2 The team may also ask your child for their consent, as long as we feel they fully understand what is involved.

3.3 If you or your child feel unable to give consent for the Child Protection Medical Assessment, then this may need to be discussed with colleagues in Children's Social Care and/or the Police in order to ensure your child's safety.

4. Child Protection Medical Assessments

4.1 A Child Protection Medical Assessment may need to be completed to check for any signs of harm that may have happened to your child. An experienced children's doctor will take a history of events and may do a physical examination. A chaperone (another member of the team) should always be present during these examinations.

4.2 Children's Social Care are always informed when a Child Protection Medical Assessment is undertaken as they have a legal duty to investigate any child protection concerns.

4.3 Your allocated Social Worker will be able to talk to you about the child protection process and any decisions which may need to be made about your child's safety, including plans for discharge from the hospital.

4.4 Child protection concerns are also shared with colleagues from the Police, and you will be kept informed of this.

5. Medical investigations

These can include:

- **Blood and urine tests** – these may be needed to look for any other medical cause for the concerns we have. Sometimes there is a bit of a delay in the results coming back as the tests may need to go to another hospital to be looked at.

- **X-rays** – there may be different sorts of X-rays taken or even a special X-ray survey of your child's body. The radiographers who work in the X-Ray department will explain the examination that your child needs, and there will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions. It may be possible for you to be present, and you may be asked to help your child to remain still in order that the pictures we take are clear. You will be asked to wear a protective apron to protect yourself from the X-rays. If you have any concerns regarding radiation risk, please discuss these with the doctor. Sometimes, X-rays have to be repeated after a number of days – this is to help radiographers identify any healing fractures.
- **CT Head scan** – in this investigation, special X-ray pictures are taken of the skull and brain. These scans are done to check for any signs of brain injuries or damage. Whilst this usually only takes about 10 minutes, it is really important that your child stays very still so it may be necessary for your child to have some medication to help them relax.
- **Eye examinations** – sometimes a specialist eye doctor may be asked to examine the back of the child's eye (the retina) which will help determine if there is any injury.
- **Medical photography** – sometimes your child's doctor may request specialist medical photographs to be taken. All images taken this way are stored securely on the hospital's IT systems.
- **Intimate examination** - a senior doctor may need to look at your child's genital area as part of the routine Child Protection Medical Assessment. However, if it is suspected or has been disclosed that your child has been sexually abused, they will need to be seen by doctors and nurses with additional training. Arrangements for such examinations will be discussed with you.

If your child has a special toy or comforter, it would be helpful to bring this with you to the hospital as it can be really reassuring for your child during these procedures.

6. Looking after and sharing information about your child

6.1 The Child Protection Medical Assessment Report and any forms completed as part of the assessment are stored securely within your child's medical records. Findings are shared with your child's GP, and with colleagues in Children's Social Care and the Police if necessary.

6.2 In order to collect information about your child, the paediatric team may also talk to your GP, Health Visitor, School Nurse or other agencies which may help.

6.3 If you need more information about how confidential health information is managed, please ask one of the doctors or nurses in the hospital.

7. Who do I speak to if I need more information?

7.1 Please speak to the medical or nursing staff looking after your child.

7.2 If you need more information about the child protection process, please speak to your child's allocated Social Worker or see the websites for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships in North Yorkshire (www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk) and the City of York (www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk).

8. Please remember...

- There is no such thing as a 'silly question' – we will always listen, so just ask.
- If you don't understand what we are doing, or why, keep asking us to explain until you do
- Feeling upset is only natural, but please remember our staff are only doing their job
- We all want the best for your child