



Why is this document important?

Pharmacists have a professional, legal and moral duty to protect children from abuse or neglect and to work with other organisations and authorities to safeguard children.

What this guidance will tell you

The purpose of this resource is to provide concise practical information to help pharmacists protect children and young people in the course of their professional practice.

It provides information in three key areas:

- Recognising signs of abuse or neglect
- What to do if abuse or neglect is suspected
- Sources of further information and advice

What this document does not cover

This is not intended to be a detailed comprehensive guidance on child protection legislation or a discussion of background context. It does not include statistical data.

Key steps

1. Identify and recognise signs of abuse or neglect
2. Act on signs of abuse or neglect

Possible signs of child abuse or neglect

It is important to remember firstly that these lists of signs are not exhaustive, and that a series of 'minor' factors could also be indicative of child abuse or neglect.

Also the presence of one or more of these signs may not necessarily indicate child abuse or neglect.

Physical abuse

- Injuries which are unusual or unexplained
- Injuries in inaccessible places e.g. neck, armpit, behind ears, soles of feet
- Bite marks, scalds, fingertip bruising, fractures
- Age of injuries inconsistent with account given by adult
- Injuries blamed on siblings
- Repeated injury

Neglect

- Failure to thrive – poor growth and weight
- Poor hygiene, dirty and unkempt
- Inappropriate food or drink (e.g. non-foodstuffs, soiled foodstuffs, alcohol etc)

Emotional abuse

- Evidence of self-harm/self-mutilation
- Behavioural problems e.g. aggression, hyperactivity, nervousness, social withdrawal
- Inappropriate verbal abuse
- Fear of adults or a certain adult

Sexual abuse

(see also section on sexual activity in children below)

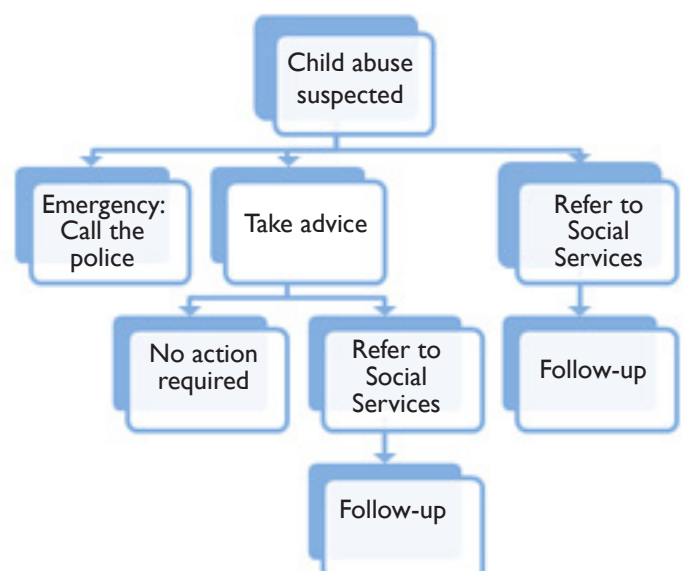
- Indication of sexually transmitted disease
- Evidence of sexual activity or relationship that is inappropriate to the child's age or competence

Parent/carer signs

- Delays seeking medical treatment or advice and/or reluctant to allow treatment
- Detachment from the child
- Lacks concern at the severity or extent of injury
- Is reluctant to give information
- Aggressive towards child or children

What to do if child abuse is suspected

You should follow local child protection procedures where these are available if not the outline process below may be useful.



Where you consider the nature of the child abuse to be an emergency then the police should be contacted.

Otherwise make a decision on next steps such as referring to local Social Services where appropriate or taking further advice. You should feel comfortable with sharing concerns and suspicions of abuse, even where these are not proven facts with Social Services.

You should not attempt to investigate suspicions or allegations of abuse directly.

Sources of advice

- Named child protection professional within your organisation, PCT, or Health Board. The named individual and their contact number is:

- Child's General Practitioner
- Peers or senior colleagues
- NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk) Helpline 0808 800 5000

Referring to Social Services

Local Social Services name(s) and number

Referring to Police

Details of local police child protection officer: Name and number

Follow-up

If referral is by telephone, then confirm the referral in writing within 48 hours using standard local referral forms where these exist. An acknowledgement should be received within one working day of receipt and if this is not received within 3 working days then Social Services should be contacted again.

Make appropriate records of concerns and suspicions decisions taken and reasons whether or not further action was taken on a particular occasion.

Sexual activity in children

Children under the age of 13 are legally too young to consent to any sexual activity. Instances should be treated seriously with a presumption that the case should be reported to social services, unless there are exceptional circumstances backed by documented reasons for not sharing information.

Sexual activity with children under the age of 16 is also an offence but may be consensual. The law is not intended to prosecute mutually agreed sexual activity between young people of a similar age, unless it involves abuse or exploitation.

You can provide contraception (e.g. on prescription or under PGD) or sexual health advice to a child under 16 and the general duty of patient confidentiality applies, so consent should be sought whenever possible prior to disclosing patient information. This duty is not absolute and information may be shared if you judge on a case-by-case basis that sharing is in the child's best interest (e.g. to prevent harm to the child or where the child's welfare overrides the need to keep information confidential).

Remember that it is possible to seek advice from experts without disclosing identifiable details of a child and breaking patient confidentiality – and that where there is a decision to share information, this should be proportionate.

Where to go for further information

RPS Support: 0845 257 2570

Email support@rpharms.com or complete an online web form at www.rpharms.com

- Department for Children, Schools and Families (March 2010) – Working together to safeguard children, a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-00305-2010>
- Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (April 2009) – Safeguarding children
<http://www.cppe.ac.uk/learning/Details.asp?TemplateID=Children-D-01&Format=D&ID=0&EventID=38906>
- Department for Education (December 2006) What to do if you're worried a child is being abused
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/dfes-04320-2006>
- Royal College of Nursing (December 2007) Safeguarding children and young people
http://www.rcn.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/78583/002045.pdf

Wales

- Child protection page of the Welsh Assembly
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/health/protection/?lang=en>
- Welsh Assembly Government (2004) Safeguarding children: Working together under the Children Act 2004
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/safeguardingunder2004act/?lang=en>

Scotland

- Child protection page of the Scottish Government
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/17834>
- Scottish Government (2005) Protecting Children and Young People: What you can do to help if you are worried about a child or young person
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/01/20382/48304>