

Types of Health Assessment in Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect with Timeframes

Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership

Emergencies - Immediate

In an emergency, children or young people with suspected abuse or neglect may be taken to the nearest Emergency Department for the provision of immediate medical care and onward referral as clinically required. Consent may not be required for provision of emergency medical care.

Suspected NAI – within 24 hours

Specialist Child Protection Paediatric Assessment at Royal Hospital for Children:

This will be urgently requested after social work / police involvement (usually after IRD), if there are acute signs and symptoms suggestive of physical abuse. The decision to carry out a child protection medical is made by a paediatrician. It is a single doctor examination and should be carried out by an experienced paediatrician, who has additional skills in child protection. A national standardised proforma is used for recording clinical assessment including history, examination and any investigations planned. Photographs may be taken, and a medical report will be completed as part of the assessment. Young children may need admission to a paediatric ward for further tests e.g. CT scan, skeletal survey, eye examination, blood investigations, which may require an overnight stay.

Rape or Acute Sexual Assault in past 7 Days – within 12 hours

Historic Sexual Abuse more than 7 days ago – within two weeks

Joint Paediatric/Forensic Assessment at Royal Hospital for Children (before 13th birthday) or at Glasgow Archway (after 13th birthday): The timing of the forensic medical examination should be person centred and trauma informed. It should be performed following discussions with the child / young person, the forensic examiner, and paediatrician. Examinations between 8pm and 8am should be avoided unless there are medical needs of the child which require immediate attention.

Neglect – within four weeks

Comprehensive Medical Assessment in child's locality as an outpatient. This specialist paediatric assessment would be indicated if there are concerns about neglect, or chronic abuse over a period of time, and is usually carried out as part of a social work investigation. It requires a number of additional tasks to be completed inc. collation of all previous medical records from HV, school nurse, GP, Hospital and CAMHS. A chronology would be expected prior to examination, and social work reports made available. A medical report will be shared with social work, copied to GP and Health Visitor / School Nurse.

Consent

For planned medicals that form part of a child protection investigation consent is required from a person with parental responsibility. Children over 12 may be able to consent to their own examination but should be supported by a responsible adult who knows the child.

References:

- 1. National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland. Scottish Government 2021*
- 2. Clinical pathway for healthcare professionals working to support children and young people who may have experienced child sexual abuse. Scottish Government 2020.*
- 3. Good practice service delivery standards for the management of children referred for child protection medical assessments. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health 2020*