

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 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 10pm and 8am should be avoided unless there is an urgent medical need to conduct an examination.

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 Emergency Department and CAMHS records. A chronology would be expected prior to examination, and any social work reports made available. A full medical report will be shared with social work and copies sent to the Named Person and GP.

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. *Child Protection Guidance for Health Professionals, The Scottish Government 2013*
2. *Healthcare and Forensic Medical Services for People who have experienced Rape, Sexual Assault or Child Sexual Abuse: Children, Young People and Adults. Healthcare Improvement Scotland 2018*