

When to consider or suspect maltreatment in a child or young person?

Have you encountered alerting features of possible maltreatment?
 physical features* sexual abuse* neglect* emotional, behavioural, interpersonal and social functioning*
 clinical presentations* fabricated or induced illness* parent/carer interactions*

Which level of concern is prompted by the alerting feature?

CONSIDER means maltreatment is one possible explanation for the alerting feature or is included in the differential diagnosis.

SUSPECT means serious level of concern about the possibility of child maltreatment but not proof of it.

Do you understand the obstacles that stop healthcare professionals identifying child maltreatment?
 Are you worried about sharing information about a child or young person?*

What to do when encountering an alerting feature:

Listen and observe

Take into account the whole picture of the child or young person. Sources of information that help to do this include:

- any history that is given
- report of maltreatment, or disclosure from a child or young person or third party
- child's appearance, demeanour or behaviour
- symptom
- physical sign
- result of an investigation
- interaction between the parent or carer and child or young person.

Seek an explanation

Seek an explanation for any injury or presentation from both the parent or carer and the child or young person in an open and non-judgemental manner. An **unsuitable explanation** is one that is:

- implausible, inadequate or inconsistent:
 - with the child or young person's presentation, normal activities, medical condition (if one exists), age or developmental stage, or account compared with that given by parent and carers
 - between parents or carers
 - between accounts over time
- based on cultural practice, because this should not justify hurting a child or young person.

Record

Record in the child or young person's clinical record exactly what is observed and heard from whom and when. Record why this is of concern.

CONSIDER child maltreatment

If an alerting feature prompts you to consider child maltreatment:

- look for other alerting features of maltreatment in the child or young person's history, presentation or parent- or carer-child interactions now or in the past.

And do one or more of the following:

- Discuss your concerns with a more experienced colleague, a community paediatrician, child and adolescent mental health service colleague, or a named or designated professional for safeguarding children.
- Gather collateral information from other agencies and health disciplines.
- Ensure review of the child or young person at a date appropriate to the concern, looking out for repeated presentations of this or any other alerting features.

At any stage during the process of considering maltreatment the level of concern may change and lead to exclude or suspect maltreatment.

SUSPECT child maltreatment

If an alerting feature or considering child maltreatment prompts you to suspect child maltreatment refer the child or young person to children's social care, following Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Exclude child maltreatment

Exclude child maltreatment if a suitable explanation is found for the alerting feature. This may be the decision after discussion of the case with a more experienced colleague or gathering collateral information as part of considering child maltreatment.

Record

Record all actions taken and the outcome.

Local contacts:

- To discuss a concern where the guidance prompts you to '**consider**' maltreatment
 - Evelina children's Hospital:** Debbie Saunders (lead safeguarding nurse) 0207 188 7188 x 51276
 - Lambeth:** Margaret Hill (Safeguarding nurse), Dr Ayanda Jolobe (Safeguarding doctor)
 - Southwark:** Helen Stewart (Safeguarding nurse), Dr Nkiru Asiegbunam (safeguarding doctor)
- To refer a child when you '**suspect**' maltreatment
 - Lambeth** - http://lambethscb.org.uk/worried_about_a_child_young
 - Southwark** - http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/266/child_protection

Physical features <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-physical-features>

Sexual abuse <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-sexual-abuse>

Neglect <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-neglect>

emotional, behavioural, interpersonal and social functioning <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-emotional-behavioural-interpersonal-and-social-functioning>

Clinical presentations <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-clinical-presentations>

Fabricated or induced illness <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-fabricated-or-induced-illness>

parent/carer interactions <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-parent-or-carer-child-interactions>

Obstaclesⁱ <http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/when-to-suspect-child-maltreatment#content=view-node%3Anodes-obstacles-to-identifying-child-maltreatment>

If you are worried about sharing information about a child or young person, seek advice from named or designated professionals for safeguarding children.

If your concerns are based on information given by a child, explain to the child that you may be unable to maintain confidentiality, explore the child's concerns about sharing this information and reassure the child that they will continue to be kept informed about who the information is being shared with and what action is being taken.

When gathering collateral information from other health disciplines and agencies, use judgement about whether to explain to the child or young person the need to gather this information for their overall assessment.

Information and support for children, young people and adults

- ChildLine, 0800 1111 (helpline for children and young people) www.childline.org.uk
- NSPCC, 0808 800 5000 (helpline for adults who are worried about a child) www.nspcc.org.uk
- National Association for People Abused in Childhood 0800 085 3330 www.napac.org.uk
- Survivors UK, 0845 122 1201 www.survivorsuk.org
- The Survivors Trust www.thesurvivorstrust.org