

Safeguarding children

This leaflet explains more about children's safeguarding processes at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding children is everyone's business. We all share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, whether as a parent or family member, a friend or neighbour, an employer, or as a paid or voluntary worker. Children can be thought to be in need of safeguarding if there are concerns about a child's health and wellbeing - this can include if they have a disability. Professionals can also become involved with children who we feel have suffered, or are likely to suffer, harm without our intervention.

What happens if we think your child needs safeguarding?

If professionals have identified that your child needs safeguarding, it may be for a number of reasons. Sometimes professionals may feel that you and your family might be in need of additional support to meet your child's needs. Bringing up children can often be a challenging task and you may need help with this. There are also times when professionals need to confirm who has parental responsibility for a child or a better understanding of where the child lives and goes to school for example.

Children have accidents every day but sometimes children have an injury that causes concern to professionals. In these circumstances we have a duty to ask questions and talk to other agencies including social care and sometimes the police. This is not always because we feel parents or families have harmed a child, but that we need to find out more information about how a child was injured. Social care also provide assessments and support for children with disabilities and a referral may be made to make sure that you and your child can get all the support you need in the community.

A professional will need to talk to you. This could be a doctor or nurse in the community/Emergency Department (A&E) and/or on the ward who will ask you questions about your social situation and may ask specific questions about things they are concerned about. This is a routine practice so please do not be worried. Your child may need to see a doctor and be examined. You can discuss this further with the doctor, including if you can accompany your child. If we feel that their concerns need further investigation a referral may be made to social care. Every address in England is covered by a local authority department that provides social care services.

Who are referrals made to?

A referral can be made to children's social care and/or the police depending on the concerns identified. We always try and keep you fully informed of who we are sharing information with.

What if I do not want a referral to be made?

Whenever possible we want to involve families in a referral to social care or other services, but we recognise that this is not always possible. There may be times when you may not agree with our decision to make a referral. Please remember that we only have the child's best interests in mind and we believe that we need to share information with other services. If you do not agree with a referral, please ask the professionals to explain the reasons why they think it is necessary in a way that helps you to fully understand.

What happens next?

When a referral is completed it will be sent to the relevant service who will confirm that they have received it. We expect social care to make contact with us within 24 hours to tell us how they are going to process the referral, or if they are not taking further action. Sometimes they will come and meet with you and your child, they may contact you by phone, or they may ask us to provide further information. There are also times when social care will want to make sure that the child remains in hospital until they have done their investigations. We will always tell you when this is the case. If your child has a disability, social workers recognise the increased demands made on a family by having a disabled child. Social workers are there to support you by offering a range of services in the community.

What do you need to do?

We recognise that professionals expressing concerns about your child can be stressful and we will try and support you in whatever way we can. We ask that you work with us, providing accurate information about your child and family, and co-operating with enquiries and services who are trying to help. Please remember that we have a responsibility to all children who access our services, and any concerns we may have are not personal to you and your family but a process we have to follow.

Please speak to the health professional or staff member looking after you if you have any questions or concerns relating to safeguarding your child. They can contact the Safeguarding Team on your behalf.

Further sources of information

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm **e:** letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Leaflet number: 3632/VER3

Date published: November 2019

Review date: November 2022

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A list of sources is available on request