



University Hospitals Bristol **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service
Bristol Royal Hospital for Children

The safeguarding children process

Information for families



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This leaflet is designed to help families understand the process that happens when there are safeguarding concerns.

We understand that bringing up children can be stressful and demanding. However, children have the right to be well cared for and feel safe and protected from harm. Our focus is to work with you to keep your child safe.

We recognise this might be a difficult time and you may have lots of questions. It is important that:

- you ask us to explain any parts of the process that you do not understand
- you and your child's views are listened to
- you and your child are given help, advice and are supported during this time.

What will happen?

After the doctor has spoken with you, it may be necessary for your child to be examined. This will be discussed with you.

Other procedures that might need to be carried out could include:

- blood tests
- X rays
- a scan of their head
- an examination of their eyes by a specialist eye doctor
- photos of any marks or injuries.

A professional may want to speak to you, your child, and other people involved in your child's life by themselves. This could be a social worker or a police officer.

As much as possible, we will ensure you are able to be with your child to support them. We try to work with you during the safeguarding process whenever possible. However, there are occasionally times when families feel that they cannot support the process, and it is sometimes necessary for us to seek legal advice. The wellbeing of your child will be put first at all times.

What will children's social care services do after a referral has been made?

The Children Act (1989/2004) states that 'Everyone in our society has a responsibility to make sure children are safe and well cared for'.

If we are concerned about your child's wellbeing, a referral may be made to children's social care. After receiving a referral, social care has a duty to make enquires, and health professionals are required to assist with this process. The role of the social worker is to gather information and make their own assessment of whether a child is in need, or is at risk of, or is, suffering significant harm. This will involve a social worker contacting you and your family.

Following this referral and one or more meetings, a social worker may decide:

- there will be no need for any further action
- support will be offered to your family or can be requested
- there may be an initial child protection case conference to decide if a child protection plan needs to be put in place for your child. This will involve identifying what actions are needed to ensure the ongoing safety of your child
- voluntary arrangements should be made for your child to live with a family member or friend
- legal action to protect your child is needed.

Should you feel you need legal advice regarding this process, you can contact an independent solicitor. Information can be found through organisations including Citizens Advice.

Involving other professionals

Those caring for your child (such as doctors, nurses, health visitors, midwives, nursery workers and teachers) are required to share concerns that they may have with safeguarding professionals. The information shared will depend on the concerns raised, but can include information from children's social care, your child's GP, health visitor or school nurse. In some instances it may be relevant to disclose information to the police, who may want to talk to you and your child. The police may want to talk to your child and record the conversation on video, which may be used as evidence in court.

You will be kept fully informed of what is going on, and if you require support or advice, this can be arranged. Please speak with either your allocated social worker or a member of the nursing or medical team involved with your child's care.

Please do not be worried about asking for help and support. Through working together we will be able to achieve the best possible outcome for your child.

Who do I speak to if I need further information?

If you feel you would benefit from additional support as you go through the process, you are welcome to contact the LIAISE team, the family support service based in the children's hospital. They will be able to help you understand the process and ensure you receive answers to any questions that may arise.

You can contact the LIAISE team on **0117 342 8065** or **0117 342 8158** between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

If the team is unavailable, there is a confidential voicemail. You can leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

Working with you to safeguard your child

We always try to work with parents and offer help and support at what we recognise is a difficult time.

If there are any comments you would like to make about the process, please use the box below and post this page into the comments box in your ward or department.

This information will be used anonymously to review and shape our safeguarding process. We will only contact you if you ask us to, and if you include your contact details in your comments.

(Ward staff: please send confidentially to the child protection team, level C, St Michael's Hospital)

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please go to the following address:

**[www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/
information-for-patients/](http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/information-for-patients/)**

Hospital switchboard: 0117 923 0000



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telephone number on your appointment letter.



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