**Child Protection Medical Examinations – a Guide for Parents and Carers**

**Introduction**

This leaflet explains to parents and children what a child protection medical assessment is, and what to expect.

If someone is worried that a child or young person is not safe, they need to do something.

They might think that a child or young person is being abused or neglected. This means bad things might be happening to them and they could get hurt.

A referral will be made to the Staffordshire or Stoke on Trent Children’s Safeguarding team, they will discuss the situation and decide if the child or young person requires a medical examination by a Paediatrician (this is a children’s doctor who has specialist training in child safeguarding).

Members of the family, as well as other professionals who have contact with your child, are likely to be asked questions to find out more.

It can be upsetting to families when they learn their child may be at harm but it is the responsibility of professionals to gather information that will allow the child to stay safe.

**Why does my child need a medical examination?**

When social services receive a report that a child may be harmed, they have a duty to look into this and make sure that no cases of abuse are missed.

This involves a doctor checking for any signs of harm. Remember that the doctor is there to help you and your child.

**What is a child Protection medical examination?**

A child protection examination is carried out to look for signs that a child or young person has been harmed, abused or neglected. This is similar to other medical or clinical examinations except that the Paediatrician will also look for signs of injury or harm to the child or young person.

**What happens during a Child Protection Medical examination?**

The examination usually takes place in specific clinics and the Social Worker will liaise with parents/Carers to facilitate travel to the location. The allocated Social Worker, and sometimes the Police, may also attend the examination.

You will be asked to wait in reception until the Paediatrician speaks to the allocated Social Worker to share the reasons why they have asked for the examination of the child or young person. There are plenty of toys for your child to play with while waiting.

When you are called into the examination room, the doctor will explain to you why they are examining your child, based on what they are told by the Social Worker or the Police. They will also ask you about your version of events and seek clarification on any relevant issues from you.

If you have any questions you can ask the doctor at the time.

The doctor is trying to establish facts and the Doctor should: -

* be honest and tell you what they think
* listen to what you have to say
* keep an open mind about what they think might be happening to your child

**Child Sexual Abuse Medicals**

If there is a suspicion that a child has suffered sexual abuse, a specialist team from Mountain Healthcare based in Birmingham will oversee the medical assessment.

This will usually be carried out in Walsall or in Stoke on Trent.

Specialist therapists and support counsellors will be available to ensure that the experience is a positive as possible for the child or young person.

It is very rare for young children to require an internal examination.

**Talking to your child**

The doctor may also ask your child how they are doing and how they are feeling about the whole event or scenario. If necessary and appropriate, your child may also be asked specific questions around the event at the appropriate time using specialized interviewing technics in a child friendly way. This is not always necessary.

**Consent**

The Doctor will need consent or other legal authorisation to carry out any child protection examination, this consent can come from:

1. a child or young person who has the maturity and understanding to make the decision
2. a person with parental responsibility if the child or young person does not have the capacity to give consent (it is usually enough to have consent from one person with parental responsibility)
3. the courts – for example, the family courts or the High Court.

**What can I bring to the appointment?**

Your red book and any hospital letters for your child

Your child’s favourite toys or book

A snack and drink for your child

A list of questions you have

**What happens afterwards?**

This depends on the findings of the examination and the risk of harm to the child. At the end of the assessment the doctor will explain the next steps to you and your social worker.

**Useful contacts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Childline | 0800 1111 (Freephone) |
| NSPCC | 0800 800 5000 (Freephone) |
| Parentline | 0808 800 2222 (Freephone) |
| Patient Advice and Liaison Service  University Hospital North Midlands (PALS) | 01782 676450 |