

This leaflet explains the duty of health workers (including doctors and nurses) in safeguarding children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for children, young people and their families. This includes children and young people under the care of Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) whether visiting the Minor Injuries Unit, attending an outpatient clinic or staying in hospital.

Why do we need to safeguard children and young people?

All children have the right to grow up safely. QVH is committed to providing a high standard of service for the health and well-being of every child and young person seen by its staff.

The law places a duty on all NHS staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and protect them from significant harm. There are policies and procedures that QVH staff must follow if they are worried that a child might be being abused, neglected or put at risk of harm or if children and young people:

- present with unexplained injuries
- a delay in presenting with an injury with no reasonable explanation
- are not brought in for appointments
- do not complete their treatment
- any other reason that causes concern

What does this mean if a child or young person has an injury?

Children and young people often have accidental injuries. However, some children are not kept safe and may suffer injuries, which could have been prevented or are not accidental.

Injuries can occur in many ways. Whenever doctors, nurses and other health professionals see children and young people with injuries, they have a legal duty to consider how the injuries happened. During assessments at QVH staff will ask the following questions about the injury.

- What happened?
- Was it witnessed / who was there at the time of the incident?
- What health services advised you or saw your child?
- Can you write down what happened?

If it is unclear how a child or young person was injured, or if there are concerns about their safety, staff may ask more questions or ask for photographs to help them consider what has happened and help them decide what to do next. Staff are encouraged to talk and listen to children, staff may request that children are spoken to separately from their parents. Parents / guardians will be informed if this is required.

What does it mean if a child or young person is not brought for an appointment or not completed their treatment?

If a child or young person is not brought to clinical appointments they may be at risk of harm because:

- there is a lack of engagement with NHS clinicians to assess medical needs, or
- treatment has not been undertaken or
- treatment is incomplete.

The needs and risks for each child or young person are considered by a consultant before any decisions are made about next steps.

Sharing information and confidentiality

Sometimes a nurse or doctor will seek advice or information from someone else in QVH such as a consultant, paediatrician, orthodontist, therapist, plastic surgeon, senior nurse or safeguarding professional.

Staff may come back to you and ask for more information to help them better understand what has happened, this may feel like duplication but it is a necessary part of the process.

We may need to talk about your child and family with people who know you such as your GP,

health visitor, school nurse, children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), social worker or police, if they are involved. We will keep you informed and offer help and support.

The information we collect about your child and family will be stored in written records and on a secure NHS computer system.

When a child is discharged from QVH we write to their GP and health visitor/school nurse to let them know what healthcare has been provided.

The safety of your child is the most important thing and this is always our first concern. We will work with you to achieve this goal.

What happens next?

This will depend on the outcome of the assessments at QVH. QVH treatment and advice will be provided and, in addition, it may be agreed that liaison with or referral to other services may be required to support you and your child. We recognise the stress this process may cause to parents and carers, please be reassured that the welfare of children is our primary consideration.

Who can I talk to about my child's care at QVH?

At all times, our aim is to discuss issues with you in an open and sensitive manner. If there is anything that you do not understand or are concerned about please ask the nurse or doctor who is looking after your child.

You may also speak confidentially to the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on:
01342 414000 ext 4788 or
qvh.pals@nhs.net

If you'd like to find out how you can support QVH, please visit www.supportqvh.org



Please ask if you would like this leaflet in larger print or a different format.

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Safeguarding Children and Young People

A guide for families

