

CHILD PROTECTION AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The General Dental Council (GDC) expects all registrants to be aware of the procedures involved in raising concerns about the possible abuse or neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

‘Find out about local procedures for child protection. Make sure you follow these procedures if you suspect that a child might be at risk because of abuse or neglect.’

(Principle 1.8, ‘Standards for dental professionals’)

This guidance applies equally to vulnerable adults. The GDC considers that the term ‘vulnerable adults’ means “a person above the age of 18 years who is or may be in need of community care services (including healthcare) by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”¹.

As a dental professional, you have a responsibility to raise any concerns you may have about the possible abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults. It is your responsibility to know who to contact for further advice and how to refer to an appropriate authority (such as your local health trust or board).

Dental professionals are likely to observe and identify injuries to the head, eyes, ears, neck, face, mouth and teeth, as well as other welfare concerns. Bruising, burns, bite marks and eye injuries are the types of injury that could suggest a concern should be raised.

The web-based resource ‘Child Protection and the Dental Team’ was specifically developed as an educational resource for dental professionals in 2006. This resource can assist you in identifying a concern regarding child abuse or neglect.

If you make a professional judgement and decide not to share your concern with the appropriate authority, you must be able to justify how you came to this decision.

You should contact your defence organisation or professional association for advice.

If you are unsure of the local procedures in your area, you have a duty to find out what they are, whether you work for the NHS or in private practice.

¹ See ‘Who decides’ – 1997 Consultation paper issued by the Lord Chancellor’s Department

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For further information on child protection

Child Protection and the Dental Team
<http://www.cpdt.org.uk/index.htm>

Scotland

Addendum to 'Child Protection and the Dental Team'
Procedures to be adopted (Scotland) by the dental professional who suspects child abuse
www.scottishdental.org/resources/child_protection.htm

Wales

Addendum to 'Child Protection and the Dental Team'
www.dentpostgradwales.ac.uk/child-protection.html

Northern Ireland

Co-operating to Safeguard Children, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety,
May 2003 (Chapter 3).
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/show_publications?txtid=14022

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