

Guidance on child protection and vulnerable adults

As a registrant you must take appropriate action if you have concerns about the possible abuse of children or vulnerable adults.

Standards for the Dental Team states:

8.5.1 'You must raise any concerns you may have about the possible abuse or neglect of children or vulnerable adults. You must know who to contact for further advice and how to refer concerns to an appropriate authority such as your local social services department.'

8.5.2 'You must find out about local procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. You must follow these procedures if you suspect that a child or vulnerable adult might be at risk because of abuse or neglect.'

'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 are likely to notice injuries to the head, eyes, ears, neck, face, mouth and teeth, as well as other welfare concerns. Bruising, burns, bite marks and eye injuries could suggest that 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, and 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 for advice.

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