

**Sussex Children's SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre)
Seaside View, Brighton General Hospital
Brighton, BN2 3EW**

Guidance for Police Officers and Social Workers on arranging medical examinations for possible Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

If a joint health, police and social work child protection investigation suggests that a child may have been sexually abused, the child and carer should always be offered an appointment with a specialist doctor whatever the allegation – as described below:

Every case needs to be judged individually and consider the child's best interests alongside obtaining relevant forensic information or evidence.

Urgent medical assessments

- a. To record acute forensic genital and other injuries as these may heal very quickly
- b. To take forensic samples: within 3 days – 7days of an alleged event according to child's age and the alleged incident
- c. When the child has symptoms e.g. bleeding or pain (but this may need urgent medical attention at an acute hospital if there is a lot of bleeding or pain)
- d. To provide emergency contraception: with 5 days
- e. To advise about prevention of HIV in high risk situations and management of other sexually transmitted diseases

The decision regarding the need for and timing of a medical assessment requires advice from the Children's SARC doctor.

Non-Urgent medical assessments should be offered otherwise

Which doctor or facility should do the medical?

- **Aged 13 or under (and up to 19 if the young person has severe learning disabilities):** Refer to the Children's SARC Tel: 01273 242288
- **Aged 14 and over:** Refer to the Saturn Centre Crawley Tel: 01293 600469
- **Children aged 14-15 with mild or moderate learning disabilities:** If SW or Police are in doubt contact the Children's SARC for advice Tel: 01273 242288
- 2 specialist doctors are on-call at the Children's SARC **9am-5pm every day.**

Contacting the Children's SARC

Weekdays Tel: 01273 242288 to the SARC administrator initially

Weekend and Bank Holidays Tel: 01273 242288 – automatically put through to the duty paediatrician 9am-5pm. In case of telephone malfunction at weekends , Brighton General switchboard holds the tel numbers of the duty doctors tel 01273 696011

Overnight (ie between 17.00 – 09.00) if there are forensic concerns:

- POLICE to use Early Evidence Kit, seize underwear and bedding etc.
- Child not to be washed before being put to bed.
- Assume child will be seen the following morning and call Children’s SARC from 9am onwards to arrange this

Role of Police Officers and Social Workers

- The social work or police officer requesting the appointment should provide the SARC administrator with details of child’s age, address, the concerns, brief background information, any reported medical symptoms and questions. The duty SARC doctor will usually telephone the referrer to discuss the request in more detail in order to agree the timing of the medical.
- Children are seen in the Children’s SARC at Seaside View Child Development Centre, Brighton General Hospital, BN2 3EW
- A responsible parent/carer with parental responsibility must accompany the child/young person to provide medical information, consent and age-appropriate support
- It is essential that a social worker attends the appointment during working hours and wherever possible out of hours.
- The child or young person needs to know that they are going to see a children’s doctor
- SOCO (CSI) attendance and Forensic samples kit are essential for every forensic examination

Reasons for doing medical assessments following a disclosure or concern about a child sexual abuse and what to expect – background information

Some professionals and parents may have concerns that a medical assessment may be experienced as an additional trauma for a child. However, our experience has shown that both children and their families usually find the medical appointment worthwhile and reassuring. For example, some children and parents may have worries about physical “damage” and can be reassured. Children often disclose just part of what has happened to them and sometimes there are unexpected findings or disclosures at a medical examination. The medical appointment aims to be holistic and it is not uncommon to identify additional health problems that need to be followed-up.

Most examinations of children are completed through external observations and are not as intrusive as some adult examinations.

There is always a very experienced children’s doctor (paediatrician) at each appointment.

A social worker should be present both to give information and to hear any new concerns and to help take forward the next stage of the child’s care and investigation.

The paediatrician needs information from the social worker or police officer about the current disclosure or concern plus any other relevant background. The paediatrician tries to avoid

further questioning about the alleged incident but will ask questions about the child's health currently and previously. With explanation, and the child's agreement throughout, they are weighed and measured and have a general health check including heart, lungs etc. and the doctor will look at the external genital and anal region.

In accordance with national guidelines, a video or photographs of medical findings will be taken in order to avoid additional examinations of the child. The reasons for this are explained to the child and parent and consent is obtained. Swabs may be required for forensic evidence or to check for infection. A child may be referred either to the Young Persons' Clinic at the Claude Nicole Centre or their local Genito Urinary Medicine unit if there is a need to check for sexually transmitted disease in more detail or to provide further advice about sexual health.

The SARC doctor will make referrals and follow up arrangements as appropriate.