



Definition of Terms used

Not Independently Mobile: a child who is not yet crawling, bottom shuffling, pulling to stand, cruising or walking independently; includes all children under the age of six months. It also includes children of any age who are immobile due to a disability.

Child with a disability: The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) define a disabled person as a person with 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Bruising: Blood in the soft tissues; producing a temporary, non-blanching discolouration of skin however faint or small with or without other skin abrasions or marks. Colouring may vary from yellow, through green, to brown, or purple.

However, it can be difficult to differentiate bruising and unusual marks in children and young people and all such presentations should trigger consideration of the guidance within the Berkshire Child Protection Procedures. <http://berks.proceduresonline.com/>



BF.LSCB@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



@bflscb



Further information can be found on the LSCB website:

www.bflscb.org.uk

Multi-Professional Protocol: Bruising/Suspicious Marks on Children Not Independently Mobile

1. Introduction and Context

Bruising is the most common presenting feature of physical abuse in children therefore bruising in a child of any age is a matter for enquiry and concern. While a high proportion of bruising in older children will be of accidental origin, bruising in children who are not independently mobile (that is not crawling, pulling to stand, walking or confined by disability) is highly predictive of maltreatment. Bruising occurs in less than 1% of children in this group. There is a substantial and well-founded research base on the significance of bruising / unusual marks in children.¹

Research shows that children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse and neglect and are therefore more likely to experience non accidental injuries.

Recent Serious Case Reviews and individual child protection cases across Berkshire have indicated that staff and volunteers have sometimes underestimated, or not recognised the potential for physical abuse, of the presence of bruising / suspicious marks in children who are not independently mobile (*see back for **Definition of Terms used***). As a result there have been a number of cases where children have suffered significant abuse that might have been prevented if action had been taken at an earlier stage.

2. Process

Bruising and unusual marks in a not independently mobile child is rare and must always result in an immediate consultation with Children's Social Care or the Emergency Duty Team out of hours.

¹ CORE INFO Cardiff Child Protection Systematic Review Group website

Bruising / suspicious marks will never be interpreted in isolation and will always be assessed in the context of medical and social history, individual development and any explanation given. Assessments will be led by Children's Social Care and a lead medical professional.

All telephone referrals should be followed up in writing within 48 hours. Children's Social Care will co-ordinate multi-professional information sharing and assessment.

For Children's Social Care, contact: **01344 352020** (9am to 5pm)

For Emergency Duty Team, contact: **01344 786543** (5pm to 9am, weekends and bank holidays)

3. Involving Parents or Carers

As far as possible, parents or carers should be included in the decision-making process, unless to do so would jeopardise information gathering (e.g. information could be destroyed), or if it would pose a further risk to the child.

Staff and volunteers should explain at an early stage why, in cases of bruising in not independently mobile children, additional concern, questioning and examination are required. The LSCB has produced an information leaflet for parents/carers that you may also wish to refer to.

If a parent or carer is uncooperative or refuses to take the child for further assessment, this should be reported immediately to Children's Social Care Services. If possible the child should be kept under supervision until steps can be taken to secure his or her safety.



Member of staff/volunteer observes bruising/suspicious marks to a child not independently mobile.

Seek an explanation from the family and record their explanation (i.e. using their exact words). Record what the bruising looks like.

Contact Children's Social Care (CSC) on 01344 352020 (9am to 5pm) or 01344 786543 (outside office hours) for discussion and advice.

CSC to follow 'Bruising in Children who are Not Independently Mobile: A Protocol for Assessment, Management and Referral by Health Practitioners' and initiate multi-agency information gathering/assessment.

Follow Berkshire Child Protection Procedures

www.bflscb.org.uk