Child Protection Medicals

What are child protection medicals?

Child protection medicals (often called Section 47 medical assessments) are specialist examinations carried out by experienced paediatricians to assess whether a child has been abused or neglected, and to identify any unmet health needs. They are different from routine clinical checks: their purpose is safeguarding, evidence-informed decision-making, and supporting the multi-agency assessment. Outcomes include a medical opinion and report to inform safeguarding planning.



What professionals should do

- Recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Contact Family Connect on 01926 414144 to escalate concerns promptly to trigger a strategy discussion.
- Share information to support timely decision making.
- Consider whether siblings also require medical assessment.
- Support the child and family to understand the process.
- Challenge and use WSCP Escalation Policy if a medical assessment is not progressing.

When are medicals considered?

Medicals should be considered whenever significant harm is suspected, a child discloses abuse, or concerns arise during a Section 47 enquiry. A strategy discussion/meeting (children's social care, police, health) decides whether, when and what type of medical is needed, with paediatric advice. In urgent situations (e.g. serious injury or recent sexual assault), a medical may be arranged immediately to protect the child and preserve evidence.

Why timely medicals matter

Prompt assessment is essential to preserve evidence, meet health needs, and support safeguarding. Good practice aims for:

- Physical injury: ideally within 24 hours.
- Acute CSA: as soon as possible.
- Non-acute/historic concerns (including neglect): within 7–10 working days, based on clinical need.
- If delays occur, agencies must ensure interim safety plans.

Types of medicals

The following medicals assess a child's health, wellbeing, identify injuries or unmet needs, and inform safeguarding and protection planning:

- Physical Abuse Medical
- Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Medical (acute or non-acute)
- Neglect Assessment
- Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII) Assessment
- Pre-birth / Newborn Safeguarding Assessment

Roles and responsibilities

Below provides a brief overview of roles and responsibilities for medicals:

- **Children's Social Care:** Leads safeguarding planning and requests the medical.
- **Health:** Undertakes assessments, provides treatment, and produces reports.
- **Police:** Lead criminal and forensic investigations where required.
- **Specialists:** Provide additional expertise as needed.

Consent and the child's voice

Medical examinations require informed consent or appropriate legal authority. A competent child may consent or refuse. Where this is not possible, consent must be obtained from a person with parental responsibility or through the local authority or courts where required.

Examinations should be explained clearly with time allowed for questions, minimise distress, and be adapted to the child's communication, language, cultural, and any additional needs.

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