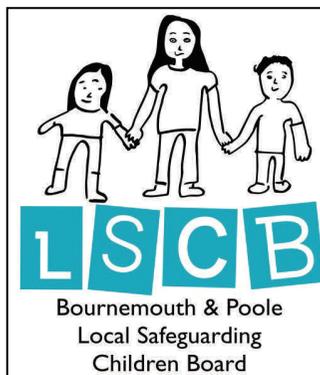


Q: What will Children's Services Department do?

A: Your health advisor will ring the Children's Services Department, who will make some enquiries about you and your child. They will check whether you have received services from them in the past. They may also ask for information from your GP and your health visitor. If necessary they will make arrangements to speak to you either by phone or in person. This may be at the same time as your attendance with a child health specialist or at a separate appointment and they may want to visit you at home. They will talk to the child health specialist who examined your child to decide whether any further action needs to be taken or treatment given.

Q: All this is very upsetting. I feel as though I am being accused of hurting my child. Why do I have to be put through this?

A: We know this can be very upsetting but the only way of picking up the occasional serious cause for bruising is to investigate every case where it occurs. However you can be reassured that you will be treated with courtesy and sensitivity and your explanations will be listened to and discussed with you. You will also be kept fully informed at all times so that you know exactly what is going on and why. You can ask questions at any time and will be given the opportunity to discuss your concerns fully at every stage.



What's going on?

Information for parents and carers

You have been given this leaflet because your health advisor (doctor, nurse, health visitor or midwife) has come across a bruise on your child.

Health professionals who come across bruising in a child who is not able to move under their own steam (*non-independently mobile or NIM) are required to refer the child to a specialist children's doctor (paediatrician).

Your child may also be referred to your local Children's Services Department (Social Services) who will work with a specialist children's doctor to decide what further steps if any need to be taken.

* NIM children are not yet crawling, cruising or walking independently or are older children who are not mobile because of a disability.

Q: Why do NIM children with a bruise need to see a specialist children's doctor?

A: It is rare for children who are not able to move around by themselves to have a bruise. A bruise can be a sign of an underlying health condition, a blood disease or an infection. This means it is important that health advisors ask a specialist children's doctor to look at your child and to discuss with you why the bruise might be there.

Q: Why is bruising in NIM children such a concern?

A: It is difficult to cause bruising in NIM children with day-to-day activities such as feeding, nappy changing and normal handling. Even where babies fall or get knocked it is unusual for them to bruise (unlike children who are crawling or walking who often get bruises). However, there are also some important causes of bruising which may seriously affect the child's health. The child may bruise easily, for example, due to a blood disease or an infection. Very occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury. Even where there is an apparent simple explanation it is important to rule out these more serious conditions. It also sometimes takes an expert to tell the difference between a bruise and certain types of birthmark.

Q: I understand the reason for seeing a child health specialist but why do I need to be referred to Children's Services Department?

A: Although rare, bruising is occasionally caused by deliberate injury. It is important that, where this occurs, it is picked up as soon as possible to protect the child. Referral to the Children's Services Department is not an accusation of wrongdoing, but is a way of looking for the causes of bruising in the same way that the doctor looks for illnesses. Even where the bruising is due to falls and knocks, families may benefit from advice on accident prevention and home safety.

Q: What will the doctor do?

A: Your health advisor will make arrangements for you to have an appointment with a child health specialist as soon as possible, and preferably straight away. This may mean attending your nearest hospital or community health clinic. The child health specialist will talk to you about your child, examine your child fully and decide whether or not to do further investigations such as blood tests or x-rays. After this the child health specialist will explain to you what they think has caused the bruising. They will also discuss this with the Children's Services Department.