

Unexplained injuries needing a Specialist opinion

Author: Dr Frankie Howsam (Named Doctor for Child Protection) / Dr L Perera
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Background

Child protection concerns may be raised with regards to an injury e.g. palatal bruising (ENT) or a skin lesion (dermatology), prompting a request for an opinion regarding causation / management.

Serious Case Reviews highlight that poor communication/understanding within agencies and between agencies contributes to poor case management and consequences for the child.

It is a statutory requirement for all clinicians working with children to advise and support the paediatric medical team with children in who there are safeguarding concerns.

Who should request / provide the opinion?

A senior paediatrician who is familiar with the case should contact the relevant speciality, requesting a **consultant** review of the patient. The opinion should be documented in the medical notes.

Anticipate that a written report or detailed entry in the notes (see *Points to include* below) may be needed for the strategy meeting.

Strategy Meeting Information

A strategy meeting is usually held to share information between agencies, discuss presentation and decide immediate actions needed. Timing varies but usually 1-2 days for NAI.

The speciality consultant may not be able to attend the strategy meeting, in which case **a brief written report would be the ideal.**

Giving a specialist opinion is not the same as being asked to be an expert witness. If you do not feel that giving an opinion is within your competencies please discuss with the Named Doctor for safeguarding children.

Points to Consider for Specialist's Opinion

- **Differential diagnosis of presentation**
- **Likely mechanism** e.g. blunt force trauma, penetrating trauma
- **Does the history provided fit with the findings / presentation / age of child**
- **Possible consequences for the child** e.g. ear haematoma – pain, infection, disruption of blood flow to cartilage and development of cauliflower ear.

Paediatric Consultant Role

To consider the specialist's opinion within the wider context of the case, for example growth, other physical findings, developmental abilities of the child and social risk factors.