

Information on reporting child abuse to social services

We who work within health and healthcare have a duty to report child abuse

If we who work in the care sector suspect a child is being abused or at risk of being abused, we are required by law to report this to social services.

Social services will ensure that you as parent/carer and your child will receive the support and help you need. Healthcare personnel must notify social services that your family can need help and support, and we are always to act in the best interests of the child.

What happens when child abuse is reported?

Social services will make an assessment within 24 hours to see if the child needs immediate protection. If it is suspected that the child is being subjected to violence or lives with violence in the family, an investigation will be started immediately.

Social services usually make a preliminary assessment where they talk with the family. An investigation will then be started, but only if suspicions remain that the child is being abused or that the family needs support. It is social services that decide if an investigation is to be made.

What happens if there is an investigation?

If an investigation is to be made, social services will often contact other parties, for example, the child health care centre, pre-school and school to gain a fuller picture of the circumstances of the child and family. Healthcare services can also be contacted. In which case, we are required to provide details and confidentiality does not apply.

An investigation must be completed within four months. Until such time, social services will determine what help and support the child and family can need or if the child needs protection.

If you as parent/carer give your consent, healthcare services can be notified of the results of the investigation.