

Management of Suspected Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

This pathway must be used for all children where there are concerns regarding possible sexual assault or for when there are genital signs or symptoms with no clear diagnosis

This pathway should be used by staff working in the trust (community paediatrics and Homerton hospital).

All CSA medicals are undertaken at the CSA Hub or The Havens, depending on when the alleged assault occurred. If there is an allegation or you suspect CSA in a child (disclosure from the child¹ or from a trusted person), please follow the guidance below. Please note that a safeguarding children referral must **always be made to the Hackney Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Telephone: 0208-356-5500 and out of hours: 0208-356-2710 if the child lives in Hackney, or if the child lives out of borough to the Children Social Care services for the area in which the child lives.**

Definitions

CSA Medical

A medical assessment to look for possible genital injuries, pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections. It provides the opportunity for the child to be linked into appropriate support services.

This assessment is not time critical and will be done as soon as possible but most likely within 2-6 weeks of referral.

Forensic Medical

***This is initiated by the police as part of their investigation.* The forensic medical assessment will include a CSA medical, and also the retrieval of possible DNA evidence. Immediate medical aftercare and support is also provided to the child. The child will be referred as needed for ongoing care.**

This assessment is time critical and will be done within hours of the referral.

Pathway

Acute – alleged assault within the last 7 days

Doctors, social workers or Police should contact the Havens for advice (0203-299-1599- Mon -Fri 9-5 or 02032996900 24/7) if there is any uncertainty. The Havens team are available to provide advice 24/7. Consider referral for assessment if the YP is unsure if there was an assault or not for example intoxicated with associated loss of consciousness and circumstances that might suggest a possible assault

For children up to their 13th birthday

Police must be notified of all alleged assaults in children up to their 13th birthday. The Havens will only accept referrals from Police for forensic medical assessments in this age group.

For children over 13 years

Encourage the young person to consent to a referral to the police. If the young person does not want Police involvement but consents to a medical assessment a referral can be made to the Haven by either the doctor, social worker or patient themselves. Referral must be made to MASH as well.

If the young person declines either police input or referral for a CSA medical, then treat as needed.

Consider the need for the following, particularly if not being seen immediately at the Haven or if declines medical assessment: emergency oral contraception, post exposure prophylaxis for HIV and Hep B vaccination, treatment for any symptomatic STI – This care can be provided in A and E or by the GP

Note children < 13 will be seen by the Child and young person team at the Havens and young people > 13 will be seen by the adult team

[Child includes all children until their 18th birthday]

Alleged assault > 7 days but < 3 weeks

Alleged assault > 7 days but < 3 weeks

Most children will need to be referred to the CSA Hub for a non urgent assessment. There are occasionally circumstances where the Havens will assess these children such as long wait times at the Hub.

Historic alleged assault occurred > 3 weeks ago

A direct referral can be made to the North East CSA Hub based at the Royal London Hospital by completing the referral form (*appendix A*) by the MASH CSC. If there is any uncertainty regarding the referral and advice is needed please contact the on call paediatrician at Hackney Ark (Mon-Fri 9-5) on 0207 014 – 7169/67.

If the allegation is made to a doctor they must refer to MASH. The doctor can refer to CSA Hub but children will only be offered an appointment if there is ongoing CSC involvement ie refer to both MASH and CSC Hub

The referral form should be sent to bartshealth.nelcsahub@nhs.net. You should get an automatic reply to your email to confirm receipt of referral.

Management of 'grey 'cases

For children presenting with genital symptoms but no clear disclosure of abuse for example genital rash, vaginal discharge, genital bleeding, rectal bleeding:

1. If presenting to Homerton A and E - take a history from the carer including a full social history
2. If referral sent to Hackney Ark by CSC regarding 'grey case' on call consultant to speak with social worker to gain more information, then direct child to A and E for assessment. Please complete the referral form from community to acute paediatrics and do RIO search to ensure acute team have access to all available clinical information.

Assessment of grey cases in A and E.

1. If the child is verbal and has the capacity to do so speak to them alone to give them the opportunity to disclose
2. Ask the carers if they have any concerns regarding possible sexual assault. Talk to the family about sexual abuse being a possibility unless you think it would put the child at risk

3. Complete a full physical examination of the child looking for signs of neglect, concerning injuries etc
4. Complete a genital examination looking for rashes, obvious sites of bleeding etc. The examination should be external only and only as tolerated by the child/ young person.
5. If there is a rash or discharge take appropriate swabs. Consider getting a second opinion, from another paediatrician or advice from dermatology or GUM. You may need to contact the lab for advice on which swabs to take
6. In post pubertal girls a pregnancy test should be done
7. If you have any safeguarding concerns, contact CSC to see if the family are known to them and to discuss a safety plan prior to discharge
8. Do not treat the child with antibiotics etc but await results of swabs first.
9. Discharge the child into the care of their carers with a plan as to how to contact them with the results of the swabs. Inform them of the expected time frame for results.
10. Clearly identify who will be responsible for chasing the results of the swab

Test Results

1. If positive for a non sexually transmitted infection ie candida, haemophilus etc treat accordingly. If in any doubt seek advice before treating
2. If the swab is positive for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, herpes or if there are genital warts you should make a referral immediately to Children's Social Care MASH. A strategy meeting will then be held and further medical assessment arranged

If advice is needed

Monday to Friday 9am-5pm

Contact: Safeguarding Children Team (Hackney Ark) on 0207 014 – 7169/67 and ask to speak to a Consultant Paediatrician for advice and support

Out of Hours/Weekends

Contact the on- call paediatric consultant via Homerton Hospital switchboard on 0208 510 5555

Ring The Havens

0203-299-6900– available 24/7

Things to note

Children with suspected CSA should always be discussed with a consultant paediatrician to agree the next steps. Decisions should be clearly documented in the child's record.

If there is a direct disclosure from a child or active bleeding/injury to the genital area only examine if medically indicated otherwise the examination will be undertaken at the Haven

If there is a direct disclosure document this verbatim in the child's notes. You do not have to question the child in detail about what happened as this will be done by Police or children social care. Allow the child the opportunity to talk by asking open questions.

Female Genital Mutilation is a form of abuse. If there is a clear disclosure of FGM or significant concerns a referral should be sent directly to UCLH. Please remember there is mandatory reporting for known cases of FGM so all children should also be referred to MASH. Pending a review for FGM the child may need a child protection medical assessment. A referral for this should be sent to Hackney Ark

There is a Children's Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) service: University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (uclh.nhs.uk) which takes pan London referrals
UCLH.paediatricsafeguarding@nhs.net

Useful Contacts

Hackney MASH	0208 356 5500 (Out of hours: 0208 3562710)
The Havens	Urgent: 020 3299 6900 Non-Urgent: 020 3299 1599
Police	Non-Urgent: 101
Safeguarding Children Team Hackney Ark	0207 014 7169/67 huh-tr.CHChildProtection@nhs.net
The North East London CSA Hub	Please send form to bartshealth.nelcsahub@nhs.net

Understanding medical examinations for child sexual abuse concerns

This is a link <https://youtu.be/gOWX1xxnTWg> to an informative, evidence-based video for frontline practitioners in social care, health, and police to explain the paediatric medical examination that takes place when there is a disclosure or suspicion of child sexual abuse.