Child Protection and the Dental Team: Flowchart for action

YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD’S WELFARE

Assess the child:
HISTORY
Has there been delay in seeking dental advice, for which there is no satisfactory explanation?
Does the History change over time or not explain the injury or illness?

EXAMINATION
When you examine the child are there any injuries that cannot be explained?
Are you concerned about the child’s behaviour and interaction with their parent/carer?
Are there any other signs of abuse or neglect?

TALK TO THE CHILD
Ask them about the cause of any injuries
Listen and record their own words
Allow child to talk and volunteer information about abuse – don’t ask leading questions

You discuss with experienced colleagues

Where to go for help (insert local contact names/numbers):
LSCB/AGPC procedures (paper or web-based document)
Experienced dental colleague
Consultant paediatrician
Child protection nurse
Social services (informal discussion)
Others: the child’s health visitor, school nurse or general medical practitioner

You still have concerns

Action needed immediately:
Provide urgent dental care
Talk to the child and parents and explain your concerns
Inform them of your intention to refer and seek consent to sharing information. Very rarely situations may arise where informing the parents/carers of your concerns may put the child or others at immediate risk or jeopardise any police investigation. In such situations or if consent is sought but withheld, discuss with defence organisation or senior colleagues before proceeding.
Refer for medical examination if necessary
Keep full clinical records

You refer to social services, following up in writing within 48 hours:
Social services (daytime)
Social services (out of hours)

Further action later:
Confirm that referral has been received and acted upon
Arrange dental follow-up as indicated
Be prepared to write a report for case conference if requested
Talk your experiences through with a trusted colleague or seek counselling if needed

You no longer have concerns

No further child protection action

Other action needed:
Provide necessary dental care
Keep full clinical records
Provide information about or referral to, local support services for children if appropriate
Arrange dental follow-up as indicated

Social services acknowledge receipt of referral, decide on next course of action within one working day and feedback to you