



Safer Seven

On: Non accidental injuries



1. Background

Bruising is the most common presenting feature of physical abuse in children. Recent DSPP Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and Serious Case Reviews (SCR's) identified that children under the age of 1 year are presented in reviews as a result of a severe injury or death as a result of physical abuse. This [video clip](#) describes the action a practitioner should take if they become aware of a bruise/suspicious mark on a non-mobile baby.

2. Why does it matter?

Recent Rapid Reviews in Dudley have highlighted a lack of awareness of the DSPP Non accidental injury policy which can be found on the DSPP website.

The younger the child, the greater the risk that bruising is not accidental and therefore there is a greater potential risk. Infants under the age of 1 are more at risk of being killed by another person, usually a carer, more than any other age group of children.

3. What to look out for

Any injury, or mark that might be bruising, in a child of any age that causes professionals concern must be discussed with the parents/carers whenever possible, providing this does not pose any further risk to the child.

Remember: *"if they aren't cruising, they won't be bruising"*

If a parent or carer is uncooperative or refuses to take the child for further assessment, this must be reported immediately to Children's Social Care.

4. Using your professional judgement

Professional judgement is based on your role, training, and experience.

However, it is important to recognise that non accidental injuries can often occur on the same areas as accidental ones.

It is vital that a professional demonstrates professional curiosity when seeking explanations, this is especially important if the professional feels as though they know the family well.

5. Questions you can ask

- Have carers been asked for an explanation? Record the explanation.
- Do not suggest how it may have occurred
- When was the bruising first noticed?
- Is the injury consistent with child's developmental stage?
- It is also important to document the injury on a body map

6. Sentinel Injuries

A sentinel injury is described as 'minor' injury which is often seen in non-mobile children.

It is recognised by many practitioners as a precursor to a more significant injury.

A systematic review by the Royal College of Paediatric Health in 2020 which identified a bruise was the most frequent sentinel injury.

7. Further information: Any child who is found to be seriously ill or injured, or in need of urgent treatment or further investigation, must be referred immediately to hospital followed by referral to Children's Social Care/MASH.

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