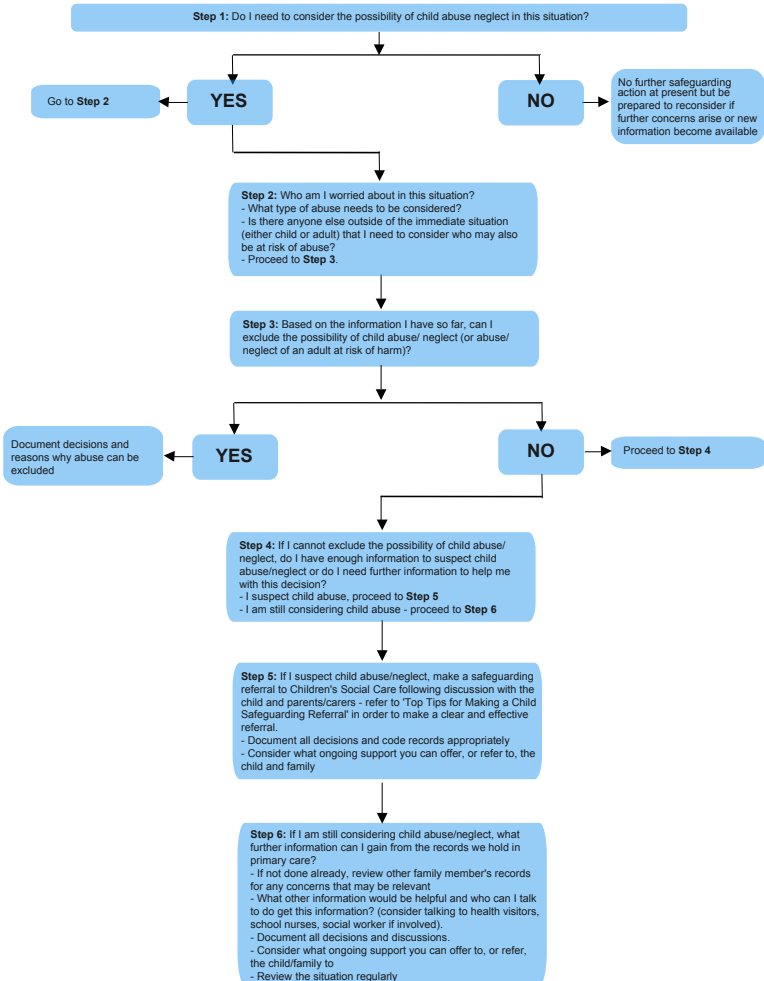


Template for considering child abuse/ neglect



Example scenario using the template for considering child abuse/neglect

A young mother, who you have been treating for depression, shares that her new boyfriend is finding the behaviour of her toddler son irritating. You are aware that she is reluctant to allow the health visitor to call.

Step 1: Do I need to consider the possibility of child abuse/neglect in this situation?

Yes - there are a number of potential concerns here
- there is a young mum who is struggling with her mental health who has a new partner who is finding her toddler 'irritating'. **Proceed to Step 2.**

Step 2: Who am I worried about in this situation?

Both the mum and the toddler. I am worried about mum because she has additional needs due to her depression. Depression can also be a sign of domestic abuse. I am worried about the toddler because I am worried about what the new boyfriend's behaviour might be towards the toddler and the mum when he is 'irritated' by the toddler's behaviour. I am worried that the new boyfriend, if irritated, may hurt the toddler – either emotionally or physically. I am also concerned that mum is reluctant to allow the health visitor to call – why is this? This could be a sign of depression – not feeling able to meet with people, but it could also be a sign that she is not allowed to have the health visitor to call or is worried what the health visitor might think about her home/relationship.

What type of abuse needs to be considered?

I am concerned about the possibility of physical abuse as well as emotional abuse. I also need to consider domestic abuse.

Is there anyone else outside of the immediate situation (either child or adult) that I need to consider who may also be at risk of abuse? I need to consider if there are any other children in the family or any adults who may be at risk of harm e.g. a grandparent with dementia who lives in the house

Proceed to Step 3.

Step 3: Based on the information I have so far, can I exclude the possibility of child abuse/neglect (or abuse/neglect of an adult at risk of harm)?

No - I don't have enough information yet to be able to exclude abuse. **Proceed to Step 4.**

Step 4: If I cannot exclude the possibility of child abuse/neglect, do I have enough information to suspect child abuse/neglect or do I need further information to help me with this decision?

I am still considering child abuse. I still do not have enough information to raise my level of concern to 'suspect' child abuse.

Proceed to Step 6.

Step 6: If I am still considering child abuse/neglect, what further information can I gain from the records we hold in primary care?

If not done already, review other family member's records for any concerns that may be relevant. On reviewing the toddler's records, I note that the toddler has not been brought for his recent immunisations and he has also not been brought to a recent dermatology out-patient appointment for a review of his eczema.

I want to ask mum to elaborate more on her boyfriend's behaviour e.g. what does he do when he is 'irritated'? I would ask her directly if her boyfriend hits her or the toddler or uses any other form of physical violence. I would ask mum if she feels safe at home with her boyfriend and what she would like to happen now – what help and support would she like?

Mum responds that her boyfriend has threatened to hit her on occasions and she sometimes feels frightened of him. She says that her boyfriend can be quite 'rough' with her toddler but won't elaborate on what she means by this.

What other information would be helpful and who can I talk to do get this information?

I would contact the health visitor to see if they have any concerns – they have tried to visit mum on several occasions, both planned and unplanned visits. Mum initially engaged with them really well but since having her new partner, mum no longer wants to see them.

There are no other services currently involved.

Having gained further information from mum and the health visitor, my level of concern is raised and I now suspect child maltreatment. I talk to mum about why I am worried – I am worried that her boyfriend may be harming both her toddler and her. I will explain that I would like to make a referral to children's social care for a further assessment of their needs based around their safety. I will also signpost mum to the domestic abuse services and discuss with mum the support that the health visitor can offer her. I will arrange to review her toddler's eczema and arrange further dermatology follow up if needed. Finally, I will arrange a further review to support mum and help her with her mental health.

Throughout this process, I will document all decisions and discussions.