

Safeguarding – Children and Adult Dental Patients (Dental Bulletin March 2018)

Introduction

Those working in the dental team are in a position where they may either directly observe the signs of child or adult abuse or neglect, or they may hear something that causes them concern about a child or an adult at risk's welfare. The General Dental Council (GDC) states that the dental team has an ethical and legal obligation to take appropriate action if concerned about the possible abuse of a child or adult at risk; and also to ensure that children and adults are not at risk from members of staff. Therefore, it is vital that the dental team are not only aware of the signs of abuse and neglect but also know how to report them.

Resources and requirements

There are plenty of helpful guides and information available online to ensure you and your practice is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities. For example the BDA has some useful information available [here](#):

The BDA also highlights that safeguarding is not just about making referral when you have concerns but is about changing the environment to ensure that risks to vulnerable patients welfare are minimised. They provide tips for best practice will help a dental practice to not only fulfil the responsibilities of current legislation and ethical guidance but also to take an active role in safeguarding adults and children, the BDA suggest practices should:

1. Identify a member of staff to take the lead on child protection and adult safeguarding
2. Adopt a child protection and adult safeguarding policy
3. Work out a step-by-step guide of what to do if you have concerns (include local contacts number for advice and support)
4. Follow best practice in record keeping
5. Undertake regular team training in safeguarding
6. Practice safe staff recruitment (following [DBS guidance](#))

Inspection and Regulation

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspects dental practices and regulates against defined standards. There is helpful information on the following [link](#).

There are also Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI) which are led jointly between Ofsted and the CQC having a targeted focus. In October 2017 there was a JTAI in Bristol on the

theme of children living with neglect and included an evaluation of the multi-agency 'front door' for child protection, when children at risk of harm first become known to local services and focussed on children of all ages who are being or have been neglected. The inspection had a focus on Dentistry (a theme that has emerged from other JTAs nationally) and the final report, which has now been published and available [here](#), highlighted some deficits in safeguarding awareness and process of some dental practices.

In addition there were recommendation to strengthen the support arrangements and awareness to the support is already available for dental practices (see below) and to consider dental specific safeguarding support. NHS England is also working to identify and train a dental practitioner in an advanced level of safeguarding to be a more specialist advisor for dentists on safeguarding matters. More information to follow on this as plans progress but in the interim, if your practice doesn't already it, it is strongly recommended that you follow the best practice guidance above and identify a practice lead for safeguarding (adults and children). They can then ensure the practice is adhering to statutory and best practice guidance on safeguarding.

Training

ALL staff working in a dental practice should receive at minimum a basic awareness level of safeguarding training for adults and children, usually referred to as level 1 and should contribute toward your verifiable CPD as described by the GDC. Depending on your role you may well need a more in depth understanding (level 2). The CQC have also described the level of safeguarding training they would seek evidence for as part of an inspection, available [here](#).

Many dental practices will have their own arrangements for accessing safeguarding training which may be delivered in house or via other online providers such as the [BDA](#), [Skills for Health](#) or [Bluestream Academy](#).

Equally all of the Local Safeguarding Boards (which are on Local Authority boundaries) provide safeguarding multi-agency training and many of them have their own e-learning packages which can be accessed for free. Easiest way of finding them is to type into Google your *Local Authority* area followed by *safeguarding adults or children board training* (there will be one for each). This should bring up your local safeguarding board (LSB) and the training they offer. The LSB website for your local area will also contain contact numbers and referral routes for advice and support on safeguarding queries and how to refer a case.

These can also be accessed for child protection via the SW Child Protection Procedure (SWCPP) website and clicking on your local area:

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/>

Support and Advice

The primary place for safeguarding advice, whether adults or children, is through your Local Authority and key contacts can be found via the above LSB route or [SWCPP link](#) for children.

Similarly each Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) employs Designated leads for safeguarding (both children and adults) who can provide specific health support for safeguarding. The Designated professional's role is to work across the health system to support other professionals in their agencies on all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. The designated role is not defined in adult statutory guidance like it is in child protection but the CCGs must still have a named safeguarding adults lead.

Further reading and resources

Children:

[Working Together to Safeguarding Children](#): Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Statutory guidance that is issued by law; you must follow it unless there's a good reason not to.

[Safeguarding children and young people: roles and competences for health care staff](#) – Intercollegiate Document. This sets out the various training level and competencies required by staffing group.

Adults:

[The Care Act: safeguarding adults](#): Provides the Statutory basis for safeguarding adults. The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) provide some excellent free resources for all health and social care professionals, including training.

[British Dental Association Safeguarding resources](#)

Good adult safeguarding is based on a good application of the Mental Capacity Act therefore this is a very important piece of legislation to be aware of and understand how to apply in practice. The following link provides an overview of the MCA:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/mental-capacity/>

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