Why do I need to be referred to Children's Services?
Although rare, bruising is occasionally caused by deliberate injury. It is important that, where this occurs, it is picked up as soon as possible in order to support the family and to protect the child. Referral to Children's Services (Social Care) is not an accusation of wrongdoing, but a way of looking for causes of bruising in the same way that the doctor looks for illnesses. Even when bruising is due to falls and knocks the family may benefit from advice on accident prevention, home safety and occasionally the help of social care or early help teams.

What will Children's Services do?
We will always contact Children's Services, who will make some enquiries about you and your child. They will check whether you have received services from them or the police in the past, ask for information from your GP and your health visitor and will make arrangements to speak to you either by phone or in person. This may be at the same time as your attendance with the Paediatrician or at a separate appointment and they may want to visit you at home. They will then discuss their findings with the specialist who examined your child to decide whether any further action needs to be taken or any treatment given.

Children’s services must document on their records any involvement they have in relation to a child, this means that if the bruising/mark is assessed to be a health condition or a birth mark then this will be fully documented and no further action will be taken. Children’s services records cannot be viewed by anyone other than those with parental responsibility by special request and so the only reason this would be viewed in the future is if a further concern/referral is raised in relation to your child.

My child is disabled and bruising is one of the consequences of their limited mobility. What will happen to my child?
Professionals know that bruising in disabled young people especially those with additional communication difficulties is more difficult to assess. The same referral process will be followed as for children who are not independently mobile or in ambulant children where bruising is a concern. If the bruising is consistent with any explanation provided by the carer or the young person then, and in the context of their disability, a written record will be kept using a body map and advice will be given if that is considered appropriate.

There is very strong research evidence that disabled children, particularly those with additional communication and learning difficulties, are more likely to suffer abuse from carers than their non-disabled peers, therefore this always has to be explored.

Where do I get more information about this?
We understand you will want to know where this policy comes from. We can either give this to you or you can access it on www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk. This will explain that agencies always have to act in the best interest of the child.

If you have any further concerns or worries please talk to the person giving you this leaflet who can direct you to the best person to answer your queries.

Customer Service Centre Number:
0300 123 4043

With thanks to Surrey LSCB
Why is bruising on children who are not independently mobile such a concern?
It is difficult to cause bruising in babies/children that are not independently mobile during normal day-to-day activities such as feeding, nappy changing and normal handling.

Why is bruising on mobile children such a concern?
We know that mobile children can get bruises however, sometimes a mark or bruise is seen on a child in a place that would not be expected, or the story given does not fit with the mark seen. Sometimes a child will tell someone that they have been hurt. It is important in all these situations that professionals ask for an assessment.

I have explained what caused the bruising don’t you believe me?
Even where babies fall or get knocked it is unusual for them to bruise. There are also some important medical causes of bruising which may seriously affect the child’s health.

Very occasionally bruising may be due to deliberate injury. Even where there is an apparently simple explanation it is important in all circumstances for professionals to make further enquiries.

What will happen next?
We will make arrangements for you to have an appointment with the Specialist Paediatrician as soon as possible and preferably straight away. This will mean attending the Lister Hospital, Watford General Hospital or a specified Children’s Centre. There the Paediatrician will talk to you about your child, examine your child fully and decide whether or not to do further investigations such as blood tests, x-rays, or a CT scan.

After this the Paediatrician will explain to you what they think has caused the bruising or mark. A body map will be completed to show the location, size and severity of the bruise which will remain on your child’s medical record.

Why does my child need to see a specialist doctor?
A bruise can be a sign of a health condition, a blood disease or an infection. This means it is important that we ask a Specialist Paediatrician to look at your child and discuss with you why there might be a bruise or mark and rule out or diagnose these more serious conditions. It also sometimes takes an expert to tell the difference between a bruise and certain types of birthmark which can look very similar to bruising.

There is also a statutory requirement that health professionals discuss the bruising with Children’s Services.