

## Hospitals fail to spot child abuse, claims watchdog

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NHS hospital staff are failing to spot signs of child abuse, according to the government's health watchdog.

According to the Healthcare Commission, just under a third of the 154 hospital trusts in England failed to meet the required standards of training for their staff in child protection measures.

In all, 20% of trusts were 'consistently underperforming' in child protection training and 9% are doing less well than they did two years ago in the last report, the commission claims.

It suggests that staff should receive training annually instead of every three years, which is the present position.

According to Anna Walker, the Healthcare Commission's chief executive: 'There have been improvements but more work is clearly needed. We are particularly concerned about training in child protection'.

'It is absolutely vital that NHS staff working with children know how to recognize signs of child abuse and know what to do if they see it'.

Her views are reiterated by Tracey Emmott, who leads the child abuse team at Pictons. Tracey has been instrumental in helping to bring to public notice the events at Haut de la Garenne and elsewhere in Jersey, and represents a number of the survivors of that regime.

'In spite of all the horror stories with which we are unfortunately regaled in the media about the cruelty and abuse which children continue to suffer, hospital seem not to have taken seriously their role in identifying abuse in those children who are presented to them for treatment', Tracey Emmott points out.

'It isn't enough for hospitals to claim a lack of money. If they are aware that their services are lacking in any serious area of concern, like child abuse, then they should have the courage to point out the problem'.

'Vulnerable children are being examined and treated in hospital, yet staff don't have enough basic training to recognise the signs and take steps to investigate them. So those children are in danger of being returned to their abusive homes where they will suffer further hurt and misery.

When a health system can't be bothered to look after its vulnerable children, we should be concerned'.

[See Pictons dedicated Child Abuse page here](#)