

SAFE SLEEPING FOR BABIES



Why are we having this briefing?

This briefing is as a result of research, cases across Sussex and an incident in Brighton & Hove where a young baby was found lying in their parent's bed, next to their sleeping parent. The baby had a pillow over their head. The parent had consumed alcohol. The baby was physically unharmed but the outcome could have been much worse.

Safe Sleeping Messages

Social workers and other professionals should be repeating and reinforcing messages about safe sleeping that Midwives and Health Visitors give to parents, as part of their work with families.



Unplanned Sleeping Situations – How to minimise risk

Unplanned sleeping arrangements (i.e. where the baby is not sleeping in an approved cot or Moses basket) are highlighted as a risk in research.

All staff should be addressing unplanned sleeping scenarios with parents and anticipating they might be needed. For example, what will a parent do if they are awake in the night with the baby, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken drugs? Where will they put the baby? How will they avoid falling asleep with the baby in an unsafe place? These 'What If' issues should be discussed with parents and incorporated into all children's plans.

Remember to consider older siblings in safe sleeping messages –
Where do they sleep?
Are they involved in the care of the baby?

Consider the risks of temporary sleeping arrangements, e.g. families sleeping in the living room.

Buggies: Babies should not be left to sleep in buggies - there are emerging concerns about the danger of buggies not being safe places to place a baby to sleep.

ICON Message

Staff should also be reinforcing messages about ICON and helping parents to manage crying babies. Plans should address crying babies, and how the parent will deal with this situation, who will they call for support etc.

ICON is all about helping people who care for babies to cope with crying.

ICON: Babies Cry You Can Cope

ICON stands for:

- * I – Infant crying is normal
- * C – Comforting methods can help
- * O – It's OK to walk away
- * N – Never, ever shake a baby

Key Messages



Please note these key messages about dangerous sleeping practices:

1

Parents must never sleep in the same bed as their baby if they smoke (even if they don't smoke in the bedroom), drink alcohol or take drugs or are extremely tired, if the baby was born prematurely or was of low birth-weight.

2

Parents and older children must never sleep on a sofa or armchair with the baby, as this can increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) by 50 times.

Useful Links to further Information

[Lullaby Trust](#)

[Out of routine: A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy \(SUDI\) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm](#)

[ICON](#)

