

Unplanned and Unsafe Sleeping for Babies

5 Minute Briefing for Practitioners



Talking to Parents & Carers is Key!

If you are working with families, you should be sharing safe sleeping messages regularly. This includes signposting to appropriate health professionals if there are any queries or concerns about baby and asking questions about how they might manage when out of routine or find themselves with unplanned sleeping arrangements. Be professionally curious if you observe an unsafe sleeping setup during a home visit or whilst having a conversation.

Key Messages to Share with Parents

- Safer sleep guidelines are really important to help keep baby safe. If away from home or out of routine; maybe visiting family or friends, make sure there is a plan for babies' sleeping arrangements.
- Never share a bed or sleeping space with your baby if you've had any alcohol or taken any drugs (including prescribed medication) that make you drowsy or sleep heavily.
- Parents must never sleep in the same bed as their baby if they smoke (even if they don't smoke in the bedroom) or if baby was born prematurely or was of low birthweight.

Have "what if...?" conversations with parents. Ask what they will do if they have been drinking and baby wakes in the night or how will they care for baby safely if they are currently taking medication that makes them drowsy or sleep heavily. Having these conversations will help parents to plan and understand how important it is to consider and plan for safe sleeping every time.



Minimising Risk

It is vital that practitioners across agencies continue to promote safer sleeping messages to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, also known as cot death. There are some simple things that parents can do to help keep a baby safe whilst sleeping; these easy to remember guidelines are a great place to start:

- Put babies on their back to sleep
- Make sure babies have their own clear, flat space to sleep in
- If you're considering co-sleeping, speak to a health professional for advice
- Keep babies in a smoke free environment
- Talking to parents about the risks around unplanned sleeping arrangements (i.e., where the baby is not sleeping in an approved cot or Moses basket) is important so parents can plan.

Think about (and talk to parents about)

- ...about older siblings – where do they sleep? Are they involved in the care of baby?
- ...temporary sleeping arrangements – are family members sleeping in the living room on a sofa? Gaps and cushions can easily smother baby.
- ...whether babies are being left to sleep in buggies or car seats. Even for a daytime nap, baby should be placed on a firm, flat surface with appropriate covers and their feet at the foot of their cot.

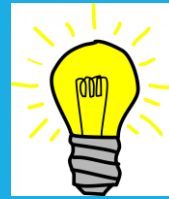


Help parents manage crying babies with ICON. Your conversations and plans with parents should address crying babies, and how the parent will deal with this situation, who will they call for support etc. ICON is all about helping people who care for babies to cope with crying.

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**



Useful Links for Professionals

- [ICON Information and Resources](#)
- [Out of Routine - A Review of Sudden Unexpected in Infancy \(SUDI\) in families where the children are considered at risk from significant harm](#)
- [Keeping Baby Safe WSSCP website](#)



You can find out more information on safer sleeping by visiting

[The Lullaby Trust website](#)