

Co-Sleeping and Safer Sleep for Babies



Birmingham and Solihull

Background

Each year around 200 babies will die unexpectedly before their first birthday. Many of these deaths are classified as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or cot death, which usually happens when babies are sleeping.

The work to promote safer sleep for babies arose after studies found that an increased awareness that deaths might have been prevented if parents had known about safer sleeping.

Where can I find more information?

For more information and resources to support professionals promote Safer Sleep messages, visit the Safer Sleep page on The Lullaby Trust website:

[Safer sleep information | The Lullaby Trust](#)

Why it matters?

Although rates have declined since the 1990's, SIDS rates are higher than they need to be. Child Death Overview Panels continue to report that the majority of sudden infant deaths occur with known risk factors. Many unexpected baby deaths have modifiable factors and could be avoided.

What can I do?

Any professional coming into contact with families with young babies can make a difference by having conversations about safer sleep. Health professionals are key, but others including housing, social care and emergency services can make a difference by helping to identify the risks and promote adopting safer sleep methods to parents and carers.

What can be done to reduce the risks?

The safest place for a baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in a cot, in the same room as the parent or carer following Safer Sleep guidelines. However, it is recognised that some parents choose to co-sleep with their baby. It is important that professionals do not judge parents for co-sleeping in order to maintain the lines of good communication to highlight the risks and help parents make informed choices on where and how their baby sleeps.

What causes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?

The exact cause of SIDS is unknown, but it's thought to be down to a combination of factors. Babies who die of SIDS are thought to have problems in the way they respond to certain stresses and how they regulate their heart rate, breathing and temperature.

What are the risks of co-sleeping?

It is known that there's an association between co sleeping when risk factors are present, sleeping with a baby on a chair or sofa and SIDS. The risks of SIDS when co-sleeping increase when a baby is premature (born before 37 weeks), 2.5kg or 5.5lb). The risk also increases where parents or carers co-sleeping with a baby are smokers, drink or have drunk alcohol or have taken drugs or medication that causes deeper sleep.

