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Background

The work to promote safer sleeping for babies has been going on since 2009. This awareness that there were babies dying and that those deaths might have been prevented, if parents had known about safer sleeping. The current campaign 'Safer sleep for baby' gives six easy steps

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Why it matters

Some unexpected baby deaths can be prevented by how babies are sleeping. The campaign is aimed at preventing deaths where possible, and ensuring everyone who cares for a baby knows how to care for them more safely.



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Questions to consider

How can we in this team use this information to safeguard infants? Where do we see infants? Or their parents?
Do we routinely ask about sleeping arrangements, and other carers?
Do we routinely ask about alcohol, drugs and medication?
Do we routinely give and discuss information about safer sleep?
Do we check where the baby is sleeping and the temperature control of this area?



Information



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Last year the pan- Lancashire CDOP reviewed 7 baby and infant deaths where co-sleeping was a feature - all of these deaths had at least one other risk factor e.g. smoking, alcohol or low birth weight etc. Unplanned situations, e.g. holidays were particularly risky.

The six steps for safer sleep are:

1. Keep baby away from smoke, before and after birth. There is an association between smoking and Sudden Infant Death syndrome (SIDS). Even if done away from the baby as smoke clings to your clothes.
2. Put baby in a cot, crib or Moses basket to sleep – never fall asleep with them on a sofa or chair (reduces the likelihood of

overlay and overheating)

3. Never fall asleep with baby after drinking or taking drugs/ medication. There is a greater risk to baby if you fall asleep with them after drinking, taking drugs, or medication
4. Put baby to sleep on their back with their feet to the foot of the cot. This reduces the possibility of SIDS

5 Keep baby's head and face uncovered and make sure they don't get too hot. This reduces the chance overheating and accidental suffocation.

6. Breastfeed your baby – support is available if you need it. Evidence shows there are fewer deaths due to SIDS in breastfed babies.



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What to do

No-one wants to think about this happening to a family they work with, but there are things you can advise and talk to parents/ carers about to help them reduce the risks associated with SIDS:

- Remind parents of the risks associated with safer sleep
- If parents bed-share discuss with them how they can minimise the risks

- Talking about safer sleep in general will help parents and carers to make an informed choice. Make sure that you know the six steps as well as why they matter. Remember that parents do not like being told what to do, and it is more helpful to have open discussions with them to ensure that they have the information. Ensure that you have conversations about what grandparents, babysitters and others who might care for the baby knows as well as ensuring that those people do not drink or used drugs/ medication whilst caring for the baby.

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