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## Background

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

Many of these deaths can be prevented if parents had known about safer sleeping. The current campaign 'Safer sleep for Baby' gives six easy steps to reduce the risks.

**This 7mb was updated in October 2019**

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## Why it matters

Some unexpected deaths can be prevented by reducing risks.

During 2017/18 the pan-Lancashire CDOP reviewed 6 deaths where un-safe sleeping was a feature, 4 of these deaths had at least one other risk factor e.g. smoking, room temperature or alcohol use.

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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## Information

The six steps for safer sleep are:

**1. Keep baby away from smoke, before and after birth.** There is an association between smoking and SIDS. Even if done away from the baby as smoke clings to your skin, breath and hair.

**2. Put baby in a cot, crib or Moses basket to sleep.** Never fall asleep with baby on a sofa or chair, this increases the risk of SIDS by 50%.

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**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 alcohol, taking drugs, or medication as you are less responsive.

**4. Put baby to sleep on their back with their feet to the foot of the cot or Moses basket.**

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**5. Keep baby's head and face uncovered and make sure they don't get too hot.** Reduce the risks by having a clear cot space, remove bumpers, pillows, duvets, soft toys and hats.

**6. Breastfeed.** Evidence shows there are fewer deaths due to SIDS in breastfed babies, there is an increased risk of SIDS in babies who are not breastfed.

**Babies should sleep in the same room as the adult who is caring for them for at least the first six months of life.**

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## What to do

No-one wants to think about this happening to a family they work with. There are things you can advise parents/carers to help them reduce the risks associated with SIDS: Remember that parents do not like being told what to do, it is helpful to have open discussions. Just talking about safer sleep will help parents and carers to make an informed choice. Remind parents of the risks associated with un-safe sleep. If parents bed-share discuss how they can minimise the risks.

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## Questions to consider

How many opportunities do we get to speak to parents/carers?

What opportunities do we have to discuss safer sleep?

Do we routinely ask about sleeping arrangements and other carers?

Do we routinely ask about alcohol, drugs and medication?

Do we check where baby is sleeping and the temperature of this area?

**How can we make every contact count?**

