

**Rochdale Safer Sleep for Infants**

**Multi-Agency Guidance**

June 2022

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| Introduction |

## National Picture

The National Child Safeguarding Panel Review of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-at-risk-from-sudden-unexpected-infant-death> highlights the following key areas:

* **300** Infants die suddenly and unexpectedly in England and Wales each year.
* Deaths often occur in families whose circumstances put them at increased risk. Many of the recognised risk factors for SUDI overlap with child abuse and neglect.
* 40 out of the 568 notifications of serious incidents received by the Panel between June 2018 and August 2019 related to sudden and unexpected death in infancy.
* Almost all of these deaths involved parents **co-sleeping** in unsafe sleep environments with infants, often when parents had consumed **alcohol or drugs** and where wider safeguarding concerns such as **neglect, domestic abuse, parental mental health issues, and substance use** were present.
* There are two elements to safer sleep messages: **preventative** (messages routinely delivered to all parents and families)and **protective** (actions taken when risk factors are identified).

Recommendations include:

* Safer sleep messages require a multi-agency approach and inclusion in assessments such as Early Help assessments, Pre-Birth, Child and Family assessments, and Parenting assessments.
* Multi-agency training and guidance is needed to equip the workforce (adult and children) to have safer sleep conversations.
* Pregnancy needs to be highlighted a ‘reachable moment’ for discussions on sleeping products, opportunity to discuss ‘what if’ moments such as what could happen if parent fell asleep with their baby on the settee. It provides an opportunity to share the link between advice and risk.
* Development of a safer sleep risk assessment tool.
* Engagement and consultation work with parents and families needs to be undertaken to understand why safer sleep messages may not be acted upon, and to identify preferences for timing of messages.
* Development of a peer educator programme.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) annual data, published in 2021, indicates that the number of sudden infant deaths in infancy in England and Wales has decreased from 189 deaths (0.28/1000 deaths per population) to 170 (0.27/ 1000 deaths per population). Delays in registration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is cited as a possible cause for this. Final data will be published in late 2022.

In the same time period, the sudden infant death in infancy rate in the North West has decreased from 0.49 per 1000 live births in 2018 to 0.24 per 1,000 live births in 2019.This is now below the average rate for England and Wales.

[Unexplained deaths in infancy, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/unexplaineddeathsininfancyenglandandwales/2019)

## Local picture

* Unsafe sleep practices have been an identified factor in seven infant deaths in the borough since 2017 (three Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, one Health Lessons Learned Review, and three Rapid Reviews).
* In five cases there was clear evidence of safer sleep messages being delivered verbally and in writing to the parent by Midwifery and Health Visiting services but the advice was not adhered to at the time of the infant’s death.
* Alcohol / substance intake was a factor for the person providing care to the child at the time of death in five of the deaths.
* In two cases, health professionals observed unsafe sleep arrangements.
* There was no evidence of safer sleep messages being given to new fathers or family members supporting the family.

## Progress

* ‘Keep Baby Safe’ is a priority area for the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership (RBSCP). Safer Sleep is a key focus area due to the evidence above.
* A multi-agency working group has been established since January 2020 and has undertaken the following work:

Reviewed national and local resources available and committed to the consistent use of the Lullaby Trust resources and messages.

Scoped out the local universal health touchpoints for delivery of safer sleep messages.

Launched the ‘Keep Baby Safe – Safer Sleep Guidance’ and Risk Assessment Tool.

Embedded a Multi-Agency training programme.

Initiated a Keep Baby Safe Champions’ Group to provide updates to and support staff who deliver training to the workforce (single and multi-agency).

Consulted with families via Children’s Centres, Midwifery and Health Visiting Services.

Promote the national ‘Lullaby Trust Safer Sleep Week’ annually across the partnership including via social media, staffing a stall at Number One Riverside, and distribution of Lullaby Trust resources.

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| Aim |

The overarching aim of this multi-agency guidance is to reduce the number of child deaths in Rochdale where modifiable factors have been identified.

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that parents and their families are provided with consistent information and advice by **all professionals** to enable them to make an informed choice about safer sleeping arrangements for their baby / babies.

This includes professionals working in adult and children’s services, housing, mental health, probation, drug and alcohol services, midwifery, health visiting, early years and play and general practice staff in a position to discuss the risk reduction of sudden infant death with parents, carers and foster carers.

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| Guidance |

3.1 **Key messages for parents and care givers**

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| **Key messages for parents and care givers**   * **Every sleep needs to be a safer sleep -** have an infant sleep plan and routine, particularly if there is a change in sleep environment e.g. staying with friends / relatives overnight. * Always place your baby to sleep on their **back, on a firm, flat, waterproof mattress**. * Always sleep your baby in a moses basket, crib or cot for every sleep episode, day or night, in the same room as parent / carer for the first six months. * Never leave your baby to sleep on a sofa chair or bed. * Do not cover your baby’s head, face or use loose bedding. * Smoking in pregnancy or during the first 12 months after your baby is born increases the risk of sudden infant death. * Avoid letting baby get too hot. The ideal room temperature is between 16 and 20 degrees centigrade. * Babies who are unwell need fewer bed clothes, not more.  *It is recognised that some parents choose to share a bed with their baby. If so, parents need to seek advice from a health professional to discuss risks and ensure a safer sleep plan is in place.* |

3.2 **Our Preventative offer:**

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| Timeline | Type of Contact | Safer sleep messages delivered |
| Lullaby Trust Safer Sleep Week promoted across the whole partnership | * Aimed at expectant parents, parents, carers, family members and professionals | Yes   * Visual resources such as film clips and posters promoted via social media platforms. * Events in children’s centres, themed baby clinics, awareness raising stand at Number One Riverside. * Seven-minute briefing for professionals. |
| General awareness raising | * Aimed at expectant parents, parents, carers, and family members | Yes   * Lullaby Trust leaflets and display of posters in all children’s centre cluster buildings. * Discussion with families by children’s centre staff as indicated- such as in baby massage sessions, crèche, and well-baby clinics. * Lullaby Trust sleep information included in 1001 day ante/post-natal packs. * Lullaby Trust resources shared via individual agencies, RBSCP and Partnership wide social media platforms. |
| Families referred to Early Years (Request for Service) and those allocated a supporting families key worker in ante natal period / have a baby up to the age of one year. | Face to face contact | Yes   * Verbal discussion and use of Lullaby Trust resources as listed in resources’ section and in line with parents’ individual requirements. |
| Ante Natal: Between 28-32 weeks Gestation | Health visitor offer face to face contact to all pregnant women (universal and targeted contacts) | Yes  In line with Internal Standard for Ante Natal Contacts.  Lullaby Trust Leaflet given:    Information shared via Essential Parent (Online Resource) |
| Bump to Baby sessions delivered by children’s centre staff | Face to face sessions with higher need expectant parents | Yes   * Verbal discussion and use of Lullaby Trust resources as listed in resources’ section and in line with parents’ individual requirements. |
| Immediately following baby’s birth | Face to face with mother and birthing partner | Yes   * Verbal discussion and issue of Northern Care Alliance ‘Keeping Your Baby Safe’ Leaflet. Documented in infant’s Red Book. |
| Upon discharge from hospital | Face to face with mother | Yes   * Verbal and written Lullaby Trust information.   <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Safer-sleep-for-babies-a-guide-for-parents-web.pdf> |
| Day after discharge from hospital | Face to face contact by community midwife | Yes   * Verbal using Lullaby Trust safer sleep guide issued on discharge from hospital. * Sleeping arrangements for baby are viewed and advice given. * Completion of safer sleeping risk assessment in Red Book completed. |
| Day 10-14 | New birth visit completed by health visitor | Yes   * Red book safer sleep assessment and action plan checked to ensure completed; health visitor if assessment has not been completed to date. * Health visitors will look at baby’s sleeping environment day and night, if requested by parents. * Verbal information given alongside information within Red Book and Lullaby Trust leaflet.     Information shared via Essential Parent (Online Resource) |
| 6-8 Week | 6-8 week check by GP | Yes   * Safer sleep an identified area within the 6–8-week examination template for verbal discussion / link to written resource to share with parents.   <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Safer-sleep-for-babies-a-guide-for-parents-web.pdf> |
| 6-8 Weeks | 6-8 week health visitor contact – offered to all families | Yes   * Verbal and written information Resources as per Day 10-14 contact * Health visitors will look at baby’s sleeping environment day and night, if requested by parents. |

Safer sleep messages are delivered in the parent’s first language and with reasonable adjustments such as use of pictorial resources from the Lullaby Trust and repetition for parents with learning disabilities.

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| Identification of Risks |

In order to support all practitioners, the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children Partnership have developed a safer sleep risk assessment tool for practitioners:



The tool allows practitioners to identify, and therefore support families who are most at risk of unsafe sleeping and sudden unexpected death in infancy.

It is intended for use by all practitioners who come into contact with families and infants up to the age of 12 months to assess the sleeping environment and as a basis for discussion to reinforce safer sleeping messages.

The tool involves the mapping of known risk factors and implementing a safer sleep plan.

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| Response to Risks |

Check whether the family are aware of safer sleep advice.

Check their level of understanding both of the advice and why it is so important to follow it.

Are they following safer sleep advice? Ask where the baby woke up.

Remember **every sleep needs to be a safer sleep:** both day and night time sleeps, and sleeps at and away from home.

Ensure that the Safer Sleep for Babies information from the Lullaby Trust is given in the parent’s first language.

Explore what might be preventing the family from following the advice. This could be a range of things including advice from wider family members. Put a support plan in place and follow up as much as your professional role allows.

Consider referring on to other services for support including mental health services, domestic abuse services and smoking cessation services. Try to explore why they have not engaged before and follow up on any referrals made.

If you have concerns seek advice from your agency’s safeguarding lead and:

* liaise with other professionals working with the family
* consider whether the family would benefit from an Early Help Assessment
* seek advice via EHASH (Early Help and Safeguarding Hub) Tel 0300 303 0440 / complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF)

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| Training/ Resources and Support available for the workforce |

## Training

Multi agency training including e learning is available via RBSCP website:

<https://rochdalesafeguarding.com/p/training/training-arrangement>

## Lullaby Trust resources

The Lullaby Trust have lots of safer sleep resources for both parents and professionals which can be accessed by any professional, including those listed below:

Link to current available resources:

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk/publications-2015](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/publications-2015)

Safer sleep guidance document for parents:

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Safer-sleep-for-babies-a-guide-for-parents-web.pdf>

Easy read card which has been translated into multiple languages: <http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/publications-2015>

‘Make a Room’ and ‘Spot the Risks’ game which help parents visualise the best sleeping arrangement:

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/game-make-a-room.pdf>



Sleep product guide:

<https://www.hct.nhs.uk/media/2689/the-lullaby-trust-product-guide.pdf>

## Lift the baby - safer sleep campaign resource

<https://liftthebaby.org.uk/>

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| CONI (Care of the Next Infant) offer in Rochdale |

The purpose of the CONI programme is to support families who have previously suffered the tragedy of a sudden infant death, or where a baby has had an apparent life-threatening event.

Following discussion with and consent from the parents/carers, a referral for CONI should be emailed to Louise Wileman, CONI coordinator / health visitor:

[louise.wileman@nhs.net](mailto:louise.wileman@nhs.net)



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| Acknowledgements |

With agreement and thanks, the following resources were localised:

* Manchester Safer Sleep Guidance
* Nottinghamshire LSCP Safer Sleep Risk Assessment Tool

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