

Pan-Mersey Safer Sleep Conversations Tool:

Purpose: The document is to enable all professionals who might be going into a family home to spot any potential unsafe sleep environments for babies and young children and to be able to have conversations with parents and carers about safer sleep. SIDS claims the lives of around 3 babies every week in the UK (2020), so it is important that all professionals are having these conversations, not just our health colleagues.

All children under the age of 2 should be sleeping in a safe space.

Research has shown us that some babies are at a higher risk of SIDS than others; these include:

- ✚ Premature babies (born before 37 weeks)
- ✚ Babies who weighed less than 5.5lbs (2.5kgs) at birth
- ✚ Babies whose families who are living with poverty/deprivation
- ✚ Babies of young mothers – research has found that mothers under 20 are x3 more likely to smoke during pregnancy, mothers under 20 are at 21% higher risk of having a baby with a low birth weight and mothers under 20 are a third less likely to start breastfeeding and half as likely to be breastfeeding at 6-8weeks.

If you know the family you are visiting falls into these categories, it is important to make sure that you stay alert to any potential warning signs and that you are ready to have conversations about safer sleep.

Knowing what a Safer Sleep Space looks like:

- ✓ Clear, flat, firm sleep space
- ✓ Put them on their back for EVERY sleep
- ✓ Put baby at the bottom of the cot (feet to foot) so they can't wriggle under covers
- ✓ Keep their sleep space smoke free day and night
- ✓ Sleeping babies should be in the same room as their carers for at least the first six months – day and night
- ✓ No duvets, pillows, bumpers, nests, pods or sleep positioners
- ✓ Room between 16-20°C – not too hot, not too cold

Particular Dangers:

- ✗ Sleeping in bouncers or car seats
- ✗ Wearing a head covering for sleep
- ✗ Cuddly toys or other items in or near baby's Moses basket/crib
- ✗ Sharing a bed with an adult who smokes/has been drinking alcohol/taken drugs/is on medication which might make them drowsy
- ✗ Sleeping on the sofa/in an armchair

How to start the conversation:

- **You can ask to see where baby sleeps** – remember to ask if this is where baby sleeps in the day and also at night – as these may be different places. Remind parents and carers that babies who are sleeping in the same room as their adult carers are safer than those left in a room alone.
- **If you spot a pillow/nest in the crib** – ask the question – “is that always in the crib, or do you move it when baby goes to sleep?” – the family may be unaware of the dangers of pillows to sleeping babies.
- **If you see something near the crib** – like the cord for the blinds, the nappy bags, or even piles of clothes/toys – ask if they are moved when baby is put in the crib. It might be that the family move the crib before baby goes to sleep.
- **If parents tell you that they are sharing a bed with their baby** – you can talk to them about how they are doing this safely. Make sure that you reiterate the message that it is never safe to bed share with a baby if they have been drinking alcohol, smoking, taking drugs or on medication. Talk to them about having a clear, flat space on the bed for baby – the baby should not be sharing the adult’s duvet/blankets as they can easily overheat.
- **Where there are multiple babies** – parents of twins may put the babies to sleep in the same space, but as soon as they are able to roll, this can become a danger. Twins are safer sharing a crib if they are both put feet to foot, on their back – at opposite ends of the crib – so they can both have their own space, their own blanket which can be tucked in to make sure it can’t go over their heads. Use the links below for specific advice on multiple birth safe sleeping.
- **Stress to parents that it is never safe to sleep with a baby on a sofa or in a chair** – the risk of SIDS is x50 higher for babies who are sharing a sofa/chair with an adult to sleep as they can easily fall into a space where they can become trapped and cannot breathe. Like pillows – soft, squishy surfaces can make it harder for babies to breathe and also for them to cool down.
- **If you know a family are going away/staying with relatives** – talk to them about their plans for where baby will sleep whilst they are not at home/relatives are staying with them. Being ‘out of routine’ can be dangerous for babies as they can end up sleeping in places which are not as safe as their usual crib. If they plan to use a travel cot – encourage them not to be tempted to put in extra blankets to make it more ‘comfortable’, as loose blankets can be a real danger for babies. Babies need a firm, flat surface to sleep on – free from clutter and things that could cover their faces.

Extra help/advice:

There are lots of tools and publications on Lullaby Trust website for professionals and parents/carers – www.lullabytrust.org.uk – these include [free to download and print resources](#) for you as a professional and for you to give to families. There are also versions in [different languages](#) for the families where English is not their first language. Baby Sleep info Source - www.basisonline.org.uk/ - have lots of [accessible resources](#) on infant sleep, including multiple birth safer sleeping.

There is also a **Baby Check App** – this is free to download for families and can be used to check the symptoms of a baby who you believe to be unwell. Babies who have infections, especially upper respiratory tract infections can be at an increased risk of SIDS.

Your local **Health Visiting Team in Knowsley** can also offer help and advice to families if you have concerns – contact them via 0151 514 2666.