

Co-Sleeping and Safer Sleep for Babies

1. 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)

2. What causes Sudden Infant Death?

SIDS doesn't have one single cause but is believed to result from a combination of a baby's vulnerability, a critical stage in development, and outside stressors.

Reports from CDOP (Child Death Overview Panels) confirm that many sudden infant deaths occur in the context of known risk factors.

Increased awareness and promotion of safe sleeping may help to prevent deaths due to SIDS

[Sudden infant death syndrome \(SIDS\) - NHS](#)

3. Co-sleeping definitions.

Room Sharing – when a baby sleeps in the same room as their parent/carer, but in their own separate sleeping space ie cot/ Moses basket.

Bed Sharing – when a baby shares the bed with an adult for most of the night including for sleep.

Sofa sharing – when a parent/carer sleeps on a sofa/armchair with a baby.

Co-sleeping – when parents/carers sleep with a baby on a bed, sofa or chair.

4. What are the risks of co-sleeping?

There is a known association between co-sleeping and SIDS, particularly when other risk factors are present, including:

- Sleeping with a baby on a chair/sofa
- Prematurity (<37 weeks) or low birth weight
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Taking drugs
- Medication that may impact sleep



5. 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/carer and following Safer Sleep guidelines.

It is recognised that some parents/carers choose to co-sleep with their baby. It is important that professionals do not judge parents/carers for co-sleeping but continue to highlight the risks and help parents make informed choices on where and how their baby sleeps.

7. Where can I find more information:

For more information and resources to support professionals in the promotion of Safer Sleep, visit the Safer Sleep page on The Lullaby Trust website: [Safer sleep information | The Lullaby Trust](#)

6. What can you do?

Any professionals supporting families with young babies can make a difference by having conversations about safer sleep.

Health professionals are key, but other agencies including housing, social care and emergency services can make a difference by helping to identify any risks and promoting safer sleep methods to parents/carers.

Evidence shows that interventions are most effective when they are personalised, culturally sensitive, enabling, empowering, relationship building, interactive, accepting of parental perspective, non-judgemental and are delivered over time (National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020).