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# Safeguarding in SIX

## Safer Sleep

### 1. Background

Between June 2018 and August 2019, the Child Safeguarding Review Panel received 40 serious safeguarding incident notifications related to incidents of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI), representing one of the largest groups of cases notified to the Panel. Almost all of these cases involved parents co-sleeping with their infants in unsafe sleep environments.

As a significant safeguarding theme, there is need to move away from the view that Safer Sleep conversations with parents and carers are a health-led activity, rather that practitioners from all agencies have a responsibility and opportunities to reinforce safer sleeping messages as part of wider promotion of infant health and safety.

### 2. What is SIDs / SUDI?

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) refers to the sudden unexpected death of a baby when there is no apparent cause of death. Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) includes SIDS but also a wider range of fatal sleep accidents including explained deaths e.g. congenital issues, sudden onset illness, accidents and infanticide.
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) used to be referred to as 'cot death' but this is no longer used as it misleadingly implies that infant death can only occur when a baby is asleep in their own cot.

### 3. National Learning

In 2020, a [National Review](#) was undertaken of SUDI cases in families where there were previous safeguarding concerns. The review found that babies can face additional risks where there are factors present including domestic abuse, substance misuse, poor accommodation, and neglect. Whilst there was acknowledgement that parents can be difficult to engage in conversations with, it was also noted that conversing with a trusted professional can benefit families. They can help the wider network understand their perspective and provide challenge to families where needed. [This trusted professional may or may not be a health professional](#) so there is a need for all professionals to increase their understanding of Safer Sleep conversations and know where to find available resources to ensure a joined up approach!

### 4. Vulnerable Groups and Situational Risk:

It is important to consider vulnerable groups or the extended care network you currently work with - they can play a key role in caring for babies so it's crucial they are included in Safer Sleep conversations and have access to resources on Safer Sleep. These groups could include:

- Older siblings putting babies to sleep
- Young parents
- Care leavers who may be becoming parents and who may not be living in Hackney
- Fathers / significant others / current or previous partners
- Wider support networks including separated families where contact arrangements are in place
- Persons accessing mental health support

**Remember!** Out-of-routine events will affect sleeping routines e.g. going abroad, party seasons, staying overnight at relatives, car seats for long journeys, use of alcohol or medication which causes drowsiness.



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#### 5. Support Available

Access free Safer Sleep training provided by the CHSCP. This is an interactive session for all practitioners who work with children under the age of two and families. Find out more, book a place [HERE](#) and download the [POSTER](#) to promote attendance from your organisation.

Are you aware that the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework and Threshold of Needs document reference Safer Sleep under the example indicators of need? They also provides clear steps to take should these indicators be identified by any professional. Find the documents [HERE](#).

Access information and resources on the CHSCP [Safer Sleep webpage](#) to provide to parents and carers, including:

- A Quick Reference Card (a quick reference guide to the ABCs of safer sleep and tips for safer bedsharing)
- Easy Read Cards (a 2-sided card giving key advice for reducing the risk of sudden infant death, various translations available including Yiddish)
- Videos from the Lullaby Trust and also '[Who's in Charge' videos](#) (a series of short videos from Birmingham SCP urging parents, and those with responsibility for children, to be aware of the risks and potentially dangerous consequences of drinking alcohol while caring for children).

#### 6. Organisational Support:

To promote Safer Sleep organisations can:

- Ensure staff know where and how to seek advice, escalate and report safeguarding concerns when working with parents or carers. This should be included in safeguarding policies within organisations. Specific reference can be found in the Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework / City of London Thresholds of Needs.
- Ensure frontline staff understand their role in contributing to Safer Sleep conversations by promoting and facilitating attendance at CHSCP Safer Sleep training and by signposting them to the CHSCP webpage on Safer Sleep.
- Promote Safer Sleep Week (held nationally in March each year).

