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## Background & Aim

In Mid and West Wales, all Health Professionals who have contact with parents of babies and infants must give clear, current, consistent advice to parents, in relation to safe sleep at every opportunity.

Sudden and unexpected deaths that occur in infancy are called sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) or sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI).

Although there are no definitive explanations for some of these deaths, there is reliable evidence that links issues with an infant's sleep environment and an increased risk of a sudden unexpected death.

The Office of National Statistics report that in the UK between 2006-2014 SUID affects over 200 infants a year.



# Safe Sleeping



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## Why it Matters

The first 6 months of a baby's life is when they are at greatest risk of SUID. Parents need to have been made aware of safer sleep messages. Health Professionals particularly Midwives, Health Visitors, Nursery Nurses, GPs, Practice Nurses, NICU staff and Paediatric Nurses are all in a perfect position to be giving this advice both in the antenatal period, and in the first few months of life. Some of these deaths may be preventable.

Within Mid and West Wales, known Risk factors associated with unsafe sleeping positions and the environment have been present in a number of baby deaths.

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## Further Information

### The Lullaby Trust

The Lullaby Trust is a British charitable organisation that raises awareness of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), provides expert advice on safer sleep for babies and offers emotional support for bereaved families

Their advice is based on strong scientific evidence and should be followed for all sleep periods, not just at night. <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/> There is a lullaby trust baby check app that parents are encouraged to utilise and this can be downloaded for free via the app store.

### Safeguarding

If a practitioner is concerned that a baby is consistently being placed at risk through dangerous sleep practices they should follow the Wales safeguarding procedures.

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## Safe Sleep Means

- Babies should sleep in a suitable flat crib or cot with an appropriate mattress.
- Babies should be placed on their back only, with feet at the bottom of the cot to prevent the head becoming covered by bedding.
- Quilts, duvets and sleep products such as bumpers, nests or "sleepy heads" are not recommended.
- Babies should not wear a hat indoors.
- Babies should not sleep in car seats for long period.
- Long car journeys should be avoided or broken up.
- Pets should not share the baby's space.

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## Professional Responsibilities

- Leaflets should be discussed with the parents, not just left with them.
- Every opportunity to raise this subject both antenatally and in the first year of life should be taken.
- Alternative methods of communicating the safer sleep message must be considered and substitutes sourced when there is a disability or a language barrier.
- Midwives and Health visitors need to observe the sleeping environment, advise parents and document the findings on the individual risk assessment.
- Practitioners such as social workers and those working in community based preventative services should seek advice from relevant health professionals if they are concerned about the sleeping arrangements of a child.

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## Message to Parents

- Do not sleep on sofas or chairs with your baby. If you choose to feed or sleep in bed with your baby, you should remove pillows & quilts. You should never sleep with your baby if you have had an alcoholic drink, taken certain prescribed medication or recreational drugs.
- Do not allow people to smoke around your baby.
- Monitor your baby's body temperature and consider how this is affected by swaddling and sling use.
- Seek medical advice if your baby is unwell.

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## Safe Sleep Means (continued)

- Babies should sleep alone but in the same bedroom as the parent or carer for the first 6 months.
- Room temperature needs to be between 16-20 degrees Centigrade and the crib/cot should not be placed next to a heat source.
- Care should be taken if a baby is staying away from their usual safe sleep environment, including when staying with friends or relatives.