

Children's Services - Practice Directive

Subject:	Safer Sleeping for Babies Looked After	Issue Date:	
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Target Group	Children's Social Workers, Children's Managers, Service Managers, Supervising Social Workers, Foster Carers, Family Residential Workers, IROs, Placement Team		

Introduction

This Practice Directive applies in all cases where a baby is placed in care. It sets out the responsibilities for:

- Placements Team
- Child's Social Worker
- Supervising Social Worker
- Foster Carers/ Backup Carers/ Family Residential Workers
- IROs
- Contact Supervisors
- Managers

Since the Back to Sleep campaign in 1991, the rate of infant deaths due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) has dropped by 80%. This is due to better safer sleeping practice. Safer Sleeping Guidance has changed over time and it is essential that professionals are aware of current guidance.

Safer Sleep Guidance

(As of May 2022)

Sleeping Position - on their backs

- Babies must be put to sleep on their backs for **every sleep**, day or night - not their side or their tummy
- No equipment is needed to keep them on their backs
- Once they start to roll from back to front they may find their own position for sleeping but must still be put down on their backs

Safe, clear sleeping space

- A firm flat waterproof mattress with no raised or cushioned areas (where possible each baby should have a new mattress)
- No pillows, bumpers, quilts or duvets
- No pods, nests or sleep positioners
- Babies heads must be kept **uncovered** so they do not get too hot
- The room where babies sleep should be **16-20 degrees** and bedding suitable for the time of year
- Babies should be placed '**feet to foot**' - at the bottom of the cot so they can't wriggle under their covers
- If using a baby sleeping bag no extra bedding is needed
- Sleeping space should be clear of **all** items such as soft toys, and ensure no blind cords, nappy sacks etc are in reach
- Babies should sleep in the same room as their parents/carers day and night for the **first 6 months**
- Babies should not sleep in bouncy chairs or car seats (when not travelling)

Keep babies smoke free before and after birth

Carers should never sleep with a baby in bed, on a sofa or armchair

The risk of SIDS is 50% higher for babies if they sleep with an adult on a sofa or armchair. They are also at risk of accidental death as they could slip down and become trapped.

Babies who are born prematurely (before 37 weeks) or of low birth weight (under 2.5kgs) are particularly vulnerable and it is important that all the safe sleep advice is followed.

Newborn babies may have increased irritability due to maternal antenatal behaviours such as substance and alcohol misuse. Neonatal staff will be able to provide support and advice for foster carers for babies not settling and timescales they expect a baby to continue to be irritable. This should be included on discharge plans.

Please see link to the Lullaby Trust safer sleeping guidance. This includes advice on what equipment is best to buy " keep it simple, keep it safe".

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/>

Training

Safer Sleeping training is mandatory for all foster carers who are approved to foster babies, Supervising Social Workers (SSW), Children's Social Workers (CSW), Contact Supervisors and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). This will need to be refreshed every 3 years in line with other core training.

Here is the link to the Virtual College Safer Sleeping for Babies course - [Safer Sleeping for Babies](#)

Responsibilities of Placements Team

Babies should be matched to carers who have demonstrated through experience and training that they are able to safely meet their specific needs.

Seek assurance that the foster carer has completed safer sleeping training within the last 12 months before a baby is placed and meets the requirements around safer sleeping. This should be confirmed within the 'Placement Record Workstep' on Mosaic

For placements with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and Family Residential settings, a copy of their safer sleeping policy should be requested and uploaded on the child's Mosaic record.

Responsibilities of Child's Social Worker

The CSW should be satisfied that a baby is matched with carers who are able to meet their needs including safer sleeping provision.

The child's placing CSW must see and be satisfied with the sleeping arrangements and make a record on the child's file within 48 hours.

The CSW must include discussions around sleeping arrangements in the Placement Planning Meeting and record this in the **Placement Plan**.

Sleeping arrangements should be viewed and checked to be in line with current guidance at every visit whilst the baby is in placement and recorded in the visit workstep.

Any discussions about safer sleeping prior to or during placement should also be clearly recorded on the child's file.

Any concerns must be addressed immediately with carers and the SSW. The CSW should also update the IRO and Health Visitor.

Responsibilities of Supervising Social Worker

Prior to or on the day of placement, the SSW must have observed that sleeping arrangements meet safer sleeping practices, including the suitability and position of the cot.

Sleeping arrangements must be viewed and checked to be in line with current guidance at every visit whilst the baby is in placement.

Any discussions about safer sleeping prior to or during placement must also be clearly recorded on the carer's file.

SSW's must ensure carers have up to date training and information on safer sleeping.

Safer sleeping arrangements must be included in the individual Safer Caring Plan for the baby.

SSW's must provide respectful challenge to foster carers as a matter of urgency if it is thought that they are not complying with the guidelines.

Carers should be encouraged to seek help and advice quickly from health professionals and social workers if the baby is not sleeping.

It is important to think about the impact of sleep deprivation on a foster carer so that strategies can be put in place to help if and when necessary.

Responsibilities of Foster Carer/ Family Residential Workers

Complete training on safer sleeping every 3 years and/or a refresher within the last 12 months prior to placement being made.

Provide safer sleeping arrangements in line with current guidance for every sleep. Foster carers should also ensure back up carers fully understand these requirements.

Foster Carers should discuss any changes to the sleeping arrangements for babies with the Health Visitor, CSW and SSW prior to changes being made.

Responsibilities of Independent Reviewing Officers

Sleeping arrangements must be viewed and checked to be in line with current guidance during the initial and any subsequent reviews.

They must discuss safer sleeping practices at the initial review and include this in their **Review Summary**. This should be revisited at subsequent reviews.

Any concerns must be addressed immediately with carers, CSW and SSW and Social Work Managers advised.

The Fostering IRO (FIRO) must confirm safer sleeping training and requirements are met within the foster carer's annual review.

Responsibilities of Contact Supervisors

Ensure carers and birth family members are following safer sleeping guidance when in the contact centre.

Any concerns must be reported to the CSW and Manager immediately.

Responsibilities of Managers

Managers must ensure professionals are meeting all their responsibilities in regards to safer sleeping, as laid out above, through adequate support and supervision.

Everyone involved is responsible for ensuring safer sleeping for babies looked after