

# Safer Sleeping

A risk assessment tool for practitioners



**In Nottinghamshire there are - on average - 6 deaths each year of babies (up to 15 months old) that are likely to be due to an unsafe sleep environment. These deaths are potentially preventable.**

**This tool helps you identify those babies that are most at risk.**

Safe sleep advice is given out to all new parents in pregnancy and the first few days and weeks of a baby's life by universal health services. To prevent further deaths we need everyone working with families in Nottinghamshire to help ensure safe sleep advice is followed.

This tool allows professionals and workers to identify, and therefore support, families who may be vulnerable by identifying the risk factors. The expectation is that all workers who come into contact with families with infants up to 15 months use this risk tool to assess the sleeping environment and as a basis for discussion to reinforce safe sleeping messages.

**Remember, every sleep needs to be a safe sleep** – whether baby is sleeping at night or during the day, at home or away from home (staying with grandparents, Dad, friends, babysitters).

**The safe sleep advice for parents/ carers is:**

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep
  - Keep your baby smoke free during pregnancy and after birth
  - Place your baby to sleep in a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as you for the first 6 months
  - Breastfeed your baby, if you can
  - Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress in good condition
  - Never sleep on a sofa or in an armchair with your baby
  - Don't sleep in the same bed as your baby if you:
    - Smoke
    - Have drunk alcohol
    - Have taken drugs
    - Are extremely tired
    - Your baby was born prematurely
    - Your baby was of low birth-weight
  - Avoid letting your baby get too hot
  - Don't cover your baby's face or head while sleeping or use loose bedding
- To avoid accidents remove all pillows, soft bedding, cot bumpers and soft toys from the cot.**



A review of the deaths in Nottinghamshire over the last 6 years has identified the key characteristics/risk factors of Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths where unsafe sleeping was a factor:

- maternal smoking in pregnancy (71% of deaths)
  - mental ill health (51% of deaths)
  - substance misuse (24% of deaths)
  - alcohol misuse (20% of deaths)
  - young mother under 20 (6% of deaths)
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- parental smoking in the household (71% of deaths)
  - domestic violence (41% of deaths)
  - co-sleeping (37% of deaths)
  - unsafe sleep environment e.g. position, sofa, cluttered cot, excess covers (35% of deaths)
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- boys (59% of deaths)
  - mild symptoms of a 'snuffly' cold (39% of deaths)
  - low birth weight (<2.5kg) (20% of deaths)
  - premature (14% of deaths)

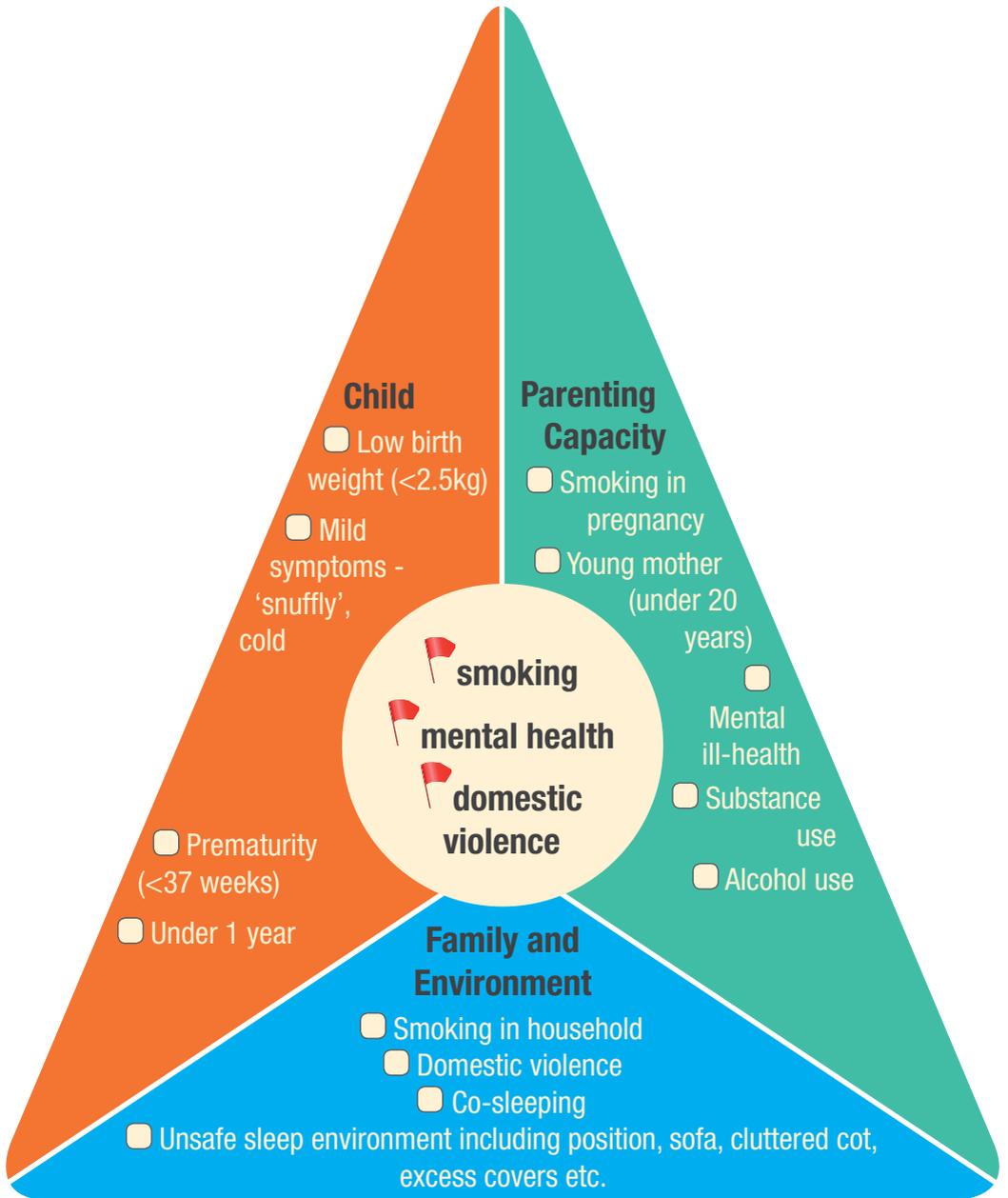
**These mostly mirror the national evidence about who is most at risk.**

## How to use the tool

The tool helps you to identify who is most at risk of unsafe sleeping and sudden unidentified death in infancy so that you can ensure they know and follow the safe sleeping advice.

**You are asked to map presence of risk factors. It's not about how many boxes are ticked, these are all risk factors in their own right.**

# Child at risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy



## What to do next

### If you identify any of the risk factors, follow these steps:

- Check whether the family know what the safe sleep advice is: check their understanding both of the advice and why it's so important to follow it.
- Are they following the safe sleep advice? Ask where the baby woke up. Remember, **every sleep needs to be a safe sleep** – whether baby is sleeping at night or during the day, at home or away from home.
- Ensure that the safer sleep for babies information from the Lullaby Trust is given out in the parent's first language.
- Explore what might be preventing the family from following the advice. This could be a range of things. Where you can, put in place support and follow up as much as your professional role allows.
- Consider referring to another service for support, this may be with smoking, mental health, domestic violence. Try and explore why they haven't engaged before and follow up any referral you make.
- Remember, families can always access advice and support from universal health services as required.
- If you have concerns, liaise with other professionals working with the family.
- Consider the need for a Common Assessment Framework (Nottingham City) or an Early Help Assessment Form (Nottinghamshire).

## Resources

Any professional can print the safe sleep resources here:

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk/publications-2015](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/publications-2015)

- There is an easy read card that's been translated into multiple languages that you can give to parents.
- There is a 'make a room' and 'spot the risks' game which helps parents visualise the best sleeping arrangement.

**The Lullaby Trust website has lots of information about safe sleeping and sudden unidentified death in infancy for both professionals and parents**

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)