Looked after babies

Information for foster carers, adoptive parents and all other carers of babies.

Babies have an increased risk of cot death if the birth mother was a drug or alcohol abuser or smoker. You may not be aware if the birth mother has a history of drug or alcohol abuse or was a smoker during the pregnancy. This makes it even more important to follow evidence based advice to protect babies from cot death.

- Do not let anyone smoke in the same room as the baby
- Place the baby on the back to sleep
- Do not let the baby get too hot
- Keep the baby's head uncovered – place the baby with their feet to the foot of the cot, to prevent wriggling down under the covers
- If the baby is unwell, seek medical advice promptly
- The safest place for the baby to sleep is in a crib or cot in a room with you for the first six months (day and night)
- It's especially dangerous for the baby to sleep in the same bed with the carer, if you (or your partner):
    - are a smoker, even if you never smoke in bed or at home
    - have been drinking alcohol
    - take medication or drugs that make you drowsy
    - feel very tired;

    or if the baby:
    - was born before 37 weeks
    - weighed less than 2.5kg or 5½ lbs at birth
- Never sleep with a baby on a sofa or armchair
- Using a dummy every time you settle the baby to sleep - day and night - can reduce the risk of cot death.

We recommend that carers are informed of the relevant medical history of the birth mother including information on drug and alcohol abuse and smoking. It is in the child's best interest. If you are unsure about birth mother risks for the baby in your care speak with your social worker.

If you have questions about safe sleep for babies call FSID's freephone helpline 0808 802 6868 or email helpline@fsid.org.uk More information can be viewed at www.fsid.org.uk

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Giving babies the chance of a lifetime