

Deaths of, or significant harm to infants

Background

NSPCC analysed SCRs published in England and Wales between 2018 – 2022 where children aged 2 or under died or suffered significant harm due to:

- Non-accidental injuries
- Neglect
- Unsafe sleeping

and identified the learning form these cases.

[NSPCC briefing](#)

DISCUSSION

1. Do you recognise these issues?
2. How do we understand babies' lived experience?
3. Does supervision encourage professional curiosity & reflection?
4. Has core group supervision improved the opportunity for reflection?
5. Do we reinforce safe sleeping?
6. Do we consider significant adults & the experiences of older children in our assessments?
7. Do we talk to older children about life with a new baby in the home?
8. Are there things we could do better?

f) Understanding the roles & relationships around the child

- Key information about significant adults unknown
- Reasons why others took on a caring role for the baby unexplored.
- The impact relationships between adults could have on a parent's behaviour & risk they might present not recognised
- Lack of involvement of fathers, unseen men

e) Unsafe Sleeping

Advice on safe sleeping can be found [here](#)

Why does it matter?

Key issues were identified in the review:

a) Recognising the impact of parents' experiences and behaviour

Practitioners do not always fully understand how parents' own experiences may affect how they care for & keep their baby safe. The impact on an infant's short & long-term development and wellbeing is sometimes unseen or unexplored by professionals.

b) Identification of Vulnerable Infants

It was not always recognised that parents of babies affected by these factors might need extra support to safely care for them:

- born prematurely
- multiple birth, or with a sibling under the age of two
- born with disabilities or chronic health conditions
- siblings on, or previously on the CPR or had a child's plan

c) Identifying when parents may be struggling to meet the baby's needs

Parental needs sometimes overshadowed risks to the infant. Need to focus on how challenges parents face may affect their infant's health and wellbeing.

Signs: missed appointments for child; reluctance to engage with services; favouring one child over another; baby has poor weight gain or faltering growth alongside other concerns

d) Professional over-optimism and lack of curiosity

- A recurring theme in reviews!
- Professional desensitisation to concerns
 - Minimising cannabis use
 - "Fresh start" – ignoring previous concerns and patterns of behaviour
 - Assumption that more affluent parents could cope so risks were underestimated