

'Out of Routine' Conversation prompts

One of the findings of the 2020 National Safeguarding Practice Review was that one of the key times that babies die unexpectedly is when families are 'out of routine'. When something 'out of routine' happens, be it big or small, baby's sleep safety can be forgotten, seem unimportant for 'just one night', or simply be impossible to implement.

Planning ahead for different scenarios can help families cope with disruptions to their normal family life and baby care. When you have them discuss what their options are in a calm and rational way they will then have a plan to fall back on in a crisis.

The talking points or 'What If?' questions on the next page are intended to help you get conversations going and bring up potentially tricky topics.

Feel free to make up scenarios relevant to the families you are working with – or brainstorm scenarios with parents, peers, families and generate safe sleep options.

Planning for unexpected events and situations

Making sure your baby is sleeping safely can be easier when you are at home and in your normal routine. When routines or living situations change, baby sleep safety can be forgotten. This is when most unexpected infant deaths happen.

**Make a plan for how you will ensure your baby's safety if your normal sleeping arrangements are disrupted.
Discuss your plans with your Health Visitor, Midwife, or other Health Professional**

Changes to normal routine

Your plan

If your baby is not well and will only sleep while you hold her, but you are tired and exhausted, what would you do?

If your routines change on days when partners and other children are at home, how do you make sure your baby still sleeps safely?

If you go to work or college and your baby is cared for in someone else's home (e.g. grandparent, childminder), how would you make sure your she is sleeping safely there?

Unexpected events such as family emergencies, or illness of other children can leave babies sleeping in car seats or pushchairs for long periods. How would you improve your baby's sleep safety in this situation?

If you had to save money by not using your heating at night, how would this affect your baby and what would you need to think about?

Imagine you visit a friend in another town and the buses / trains home are cancelled. She says that you can sleep on her couch. Where would your baby sleep? What would you need to think about?

Having visitors sleeping in your home can change where and how you normally sleep. Where might your baby be in this situation and how would he sleep safely (day and night)?

You have a babysitter come to your home so you can go out for the evening. How will you make sure your baby sleeps safely while you are away?

You go out for a night with your friends and have more to drink than you expected. What issues should you plan ahead for? What would you do to keep your baby safe?

If your partner brings a friend round one weekend, and they light up a cigarette in your home, how would you reduce the risk to your baby?

Your friends come to hang out and bring cannabis or other drugs to share with you. What might be the risks to your baby and how would you prevent these?

Changes in your living or family arrangements can also create unexpected situations where baby sleep safety can be forgotten or overlooked. If any of these scenarios apply to you now or in the future think about what you would need to provide a clear safe space for your baby to sleep and ask for help if you need it.

Being housed in temporary accommodation. Having limited income and unable to buy baby equipment. Splitting up with partner and sharing custody. Having a new partner who might stay in your home overnight. Living in over-crowded accommodation. Experiencing domestic violence or abuse. Beginning or resuming using drugs or alcohol. Experiencing mental health issues.

If any of these apply to you what is your plan for how to manage your baby's sleep safety?

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