



# Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnership

## PRACTITIONER BRIEFING

### 7-minute briefing: The Unborn/New-born Baby Safeguarding Protocol

#### **A multi-agency audit of Unborn/New-born Babies was undertaken by the IOW Safeguarding Children Partnership, Performance and Quality Assurance Subgroup in November 2022.**

The audit responds to an IOWSCP Business Plan priority, to assess if staff in the IOWSCP agencies understand, recognise and respond to safeguarding risks to unborn/new-born babies and follow agreed multi-agency procedures to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements at the earliest opportunity. The audit was chaired by the Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children, IOW NHS Trust, and was supported by a multi-agency panel. We would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to all practitioners that participated in the audit and shared their practice in this area.

The report "[Complexity and Challenge: a triennial analysis of SCRs 2014-2017](#)" notes that infancy represents a period of greatest vulnerability to serious or fatal child maltreatment. The most common categories of deaths related to maltreatment were sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI).

It is clear the most effective preventative action can be taken if vulnerable babies are identified as early as possible and this includes in pregnancy. This is an early warning system and relies on multi-agency commitment to the importance of safeguarding in this area, with all professionals working together to assess and manage the response to this high-risk group.

#### KEY STRENGTHS:

Within the audit, it was noted that:

- ✓ The referrals for services for the unborn/new-born baby were clear, timely and considered the Safeguarding Children Partnership protocols and procedures.
- ✓ Assessments had generally been completed in a timely way to ensure effective pre-birth planning; the multi-agency information shared included a full history of the case, including an overview of key events; and concerns were recorded and used to inform decisions.
- ✓ The assessments considered demonstrated good analysis of the needs of the baby, referred to both the short- and long-term impact of risks identified, and consideration was also given to risks to the new-born/unborn baby where child protection concerns were identified for older siblings.
- ✓ Professionals were persistent and flexible in actively seeking parental engagement, obtaining both their voice, and the perspective/voice of the unborn/new-born baby.
- ✓ There were positive examples of the inclusion of the father's history in determining strengths, needs and risks.
- ✓ The positive impact for families was noted where the continuity of key workers had been prioritised and from the regular multi-agency, midwifery-led meetings, which pull together both psychological and social support for parents who are considered most vulnerable. These meetings offer key professionals the opportunity to consider and respond to needs and risks in relation to unborn babies.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR PRACTITIONERS:

In **2021**, there was a significant review of the HIPS Unborn/New-born Baby Safeguarding Protocol and a number of tools for professionals were revised or updated this includes:

- Revised interactive Risk Assessment Pathways.
  - Information sharing flowchart and form.
  - Parenting observation tool.
1. Make sure you are familiar with the HIPS [Unborn Baby Safeguarding Protocol](#). The protocol contains information about roles and responsibilities, required templates and useful tools for practice.
  2. Make sure you know about the key messages for families about [ICON](#) and [Every Sleep Counts](#) and feel confident in sharing them.
  3. Remember, when you receive a copy of a Child in Need (CIN) or Child Protection (CP) Plan, this should be saved according to your own agency's policies and procedures regarding the retention and storage of children's safeguarding information.

## TRAINING:

An IOWSCP eLearning programme 'Safeguarding Infants' is available via the [training page on the IOWSCP website](#). This will be shared with IOW practitioners working with children and families.

Programme objectives:

- To have an awareness and overview of the vulnerabilities of infants, including the emerging themes from [National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews](#)
- Gain an understanding of the [Isle of Wight's Safeguarding Children Partnership's](#) initiatives to safeguard and protect infants:
  - [ICON](#)
  - [Protocol for the management of actual or suspected bruising or other injury in infants who are not independently mobile](#)
  - [Safer sleep](#) and [Every Sleep Counts](#)
  - [Unborn/New-born Baby Safeguarding Protocol](#)
- For practitioners to be aware of the criminal offence of overlay
- For practitioners to be well informed about the risk of co-sleeping when under the influence of non-prescription drugs and alcohol
- To feel more confident in applying the Isle of Wight Children Partnership's policies, procedures and toolkits in practice
- To be able to apply its learning to your own practice

