

Individual Child Risk Assessment Guide

Although sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is now very rare, over 100 infants still die every year. Tragically, some of these little infants have died whilst attending education and care services. We now have accurate research to guide us in safe sleep practises.

Ongoing research has contributed to the progress that has been made in recent years in understanding what happens when a baby dies suddenly and unexpectedly. As a result of this research, Red Nose has six Safe Sleeping Recommendations designed for parents and caregivers to help reduce the risk to the infants and young babies they care for. It is well documented that there are many risk factors associated with the sudden and unexpected death of a baby. It has been demonstrated that the implementation of the Red Nose Safe Sleep recommendations helps to reduce as many of these risks as possible.

In line with the [Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations](#), educators are required to ensure the safety of infants and children in their care. Conducting risk assessments on each individual child is an important part of this process. Risk assessments help educators to identify risks in individual infants and children that can make them more vulnerable to a sudden infant death occurring, and guide educators in taking the necessary steps to ensure the reduction of these risks.

The following document provides you with a guide on how to assess the risk of each individual child in your care. This guide should be read in conjunction with the Safe Sleep Individual Child Risk Factor Checklist and Action Plan.

It is important that you involve your providers, nominated supervisors, coordinators, managers, educators, assistants, and anyone who is involved in educating and caring for children attending the service. This guide will identify risk factors for the infants and children you care for and understand the necessary steps required to support a safer sleep environment for them. It may also help you to have conversations with families whose individual parenting practices may sit outside the recommendations for safety.

The service is encouraged to contact Red Nose at any time should you have any difficulty with this document or if you require any further clarification or information and support for safe sleep.

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Risk management of the individual	Questions to ask	Next steps
Identify		
Identify the risk(s) or potential risk(s) to the infant/child	Age Smoking exposure Was the child born prematurely? Social circumstances Medical history Cultural and/or religious practice Sleep aids Feeding	<p>There are certain physical risks that can make infants and young babies more vulnerable to sudden and unexpected death occurring in the sleep environment.</p> <p>Some of the areas to identify these risks are listed to the left. See: Individual Child Risk Factor Checklist and Action Plan</p> <p>Being aware of the individual risk profile of each child in your care will help to ensure their safety.</p> <p>This should be done at the time of enrolment, by asking parents/carers questions to find out more about the infant/child's health history.</p> <p>Once risk factors are identified, these should be raised regularly with your coordinator and/or nominated supervisor, during team meetings, and when new staff are employed and may be inexperienced or unaware of these inherent risks.</p> <p>Risk assessments should be reviewed regularly in line with the child's growth and development.</p>
Assess		
Assess the risk of harm or potential harm	How likely is it to happen? How often might it happen? How serious is the outcome?	<p>Once you have identified the hazard, you need to think about ways to modify the sleep environment, your supervision practices, as well as how often you physically check on sleeping children to ensure the risk is reduced.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>If you suspect or understand that a child in your care is exposed to cigarette smoke often, then you understand that there is a risk to that child's airway and arousal mechanism because of this. Careful supervision and more frequent physical checks during all sleep times is required.</p>



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Manage		
Manage the risk	What steps are outlined in your policy and procedure document to help eliminate or minimise risk?	<p>There are various measures you can take to manage risk.</p> <p><i>Here are some examples:</i></p> <p>Eliminate – remove the hazard e.g., remove soft toy from the sleep environment</p> <p>Substitute – replace heavy blankets, which may pose an overheating risk, with lighter ones</p> <p>Isolate – isolate unwell children from the group and check on them more frequently when they are sleeping.</p> <p>Engineer – Provide adequate spacing between cots and beds to allow you to perform checks regularly and of a high standard without disturbing sleeping children. This also ensures easy evacuation in an emergency.</p> <p>Administrative – Educator/s to undertake annual Sleep and Rest training. Educator/s to regularly review policies and understand the Safe Sleep Recommendations. Educator documents supervision during rest time noting, time, physical position of the children and the sleep environment.</p>
Evaluate		
Evaluate the current risk or potential harm	How well is the risk eliminated or managed within your service?	Evaluate how your practices have changed in line with risk reduction. Are they effective? What could you change to improve practice?



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Review		
Ensure regular review of individual risk assessments	How often will you review your individual risk assessments?	<p>Informal risk assessments may take place every day in a service as you are supervising and adjusting to the needs of the infants and children as they emerge.</p> <p>Conducting reviews every six months is appropriate however, should a baby or child achieve a developmental milestone prior to the time of review, the date of review should be brought forward to reflect adjustments that may be required.</p> <p>Reviewing and ongoing monitoring of the risk or potential harm is needed to ensure it continues to be managed as a low risk.</p> <p>Regular review and reflection of all sleep and rest practices means that your service will remain as safe as it can be.</p>



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