

Case study title: SUDI Prevention & Northumberland Eyes on the Baby

Date: 17th October 2024

Background

Approximately 300 sudden and unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI) are recorded each year in England and Wales. These occur in vulnerable and priority families for whom key contextual factors have been identified. The consumption of drugs or alcohol and smoking especially when combined with parental mental health issues, learning disabilities or other vulnerabilities are significant risks. If parents are very young and are unsupported (particularly care leavers) or if there is domestic violence, abuse, or neglect of other children the risk is also increased.

The 2020 National Safeguarding Practice Review recommended multi-agency working as a strategy to reach these families who may have minimal contact with health professionals and universal safer infant sleep provision.

In response to the review a multi-agency pilot project (Eyes on the Baby) to address infant death (SUDI) prevention in vulnerable families was developed and co-produced with Durham Infancy & Sleep Centre (Durham University), Durham County Council and Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership and was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) North-East and North Cumbria. The project had two elements; – training multi-agency staff at three different levels depending on their involvement and access to priority families, and evaluation of the application and impact of the learning using a staged approach.

The Northumberland Eyes on the Baby Project

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Following on from the pilot Northumberland Family Hubs, Northumberland County Council Public Health and Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust (Midwifery Services) commissioned to work collaboratively with Durham Infancy & Sleep Centre to develop and establish the Northumberland Eyes on the Baby (EOTB) project.



The Eyes on the Baby Steering Group

An EOTB Steering Group was established with representation from different partner organisations. The group was tasked with overseeing the project and met regularly during project initiation, delivery and evaluation stages. The group decided which members of the multi-agency workforce should be invited to take part in the project and was tasked with specific actions including workforce engagement, managing training registrations and encouraging the

completion of pre and post training evaluations. The group was also instrumental in setting up a SUDI Champions Network across the partnership which has continued to meet regularly and work together to keep the conversation and action around SUDI prevention on everyone’s agenda. The champions network co-produces a regular newsletter which includes useful updates and resources to be shared with practitioners.

Scope of the Project – Who was involved

The Steering Group determined the scope of the multi-agency workforce to support SUDI prevention in Northumberland. A broad role-based approach was taken across Northumberland to include the following key groups:

- Staff whose work takes them inside homes of priority families
- Staff who encounter families with babies, or who provide help in a crisis
- Staff who work directly with priority families in any setting
- Healthcare and allied professionals working with adults with vulnerabilities who have babies
- Healthcare professionals who support universal SUDI prevention

Similarly to the Durham pilot, workforce training was offered at three different levels depending on the frequency and type of contact staff would have with priority families. An illustration of the three workforce training strands and the roles of staff assigned to each strand is shown below:

Strand 1	For workforce members who access homes, speak to families or provide support in a crisis	Family Hub Admin, Education Portage, Virtual School Teachers, Education Welfare Officers, Customer Service Advisors, Librarians, Birth Registrars, Smoking Cessation Advisors, Receptionists, Housing Maintenance Staff, Fire Community Safety Officers, Ambulance Service Advisors and Call Handlers
Strand 2	For workforce members who provide support to vulnerable families	Family Hub Practitioners, Family Help Workers, Housing Officers, Adult Social Care Staff, Care Managers, Children’s Social Care Staff, Occupational Therapists, Early Help Coordinators, Nursery Staff, Childminders, Drug and Alcohol Service Staff, Registered Nurses, Safeguarding Team Staff
Strand 3	For healthcare professionals who are involved in routine or emergency care of pregnant and post-partum women and their babies	Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Specialists, Psychiatric Nurses & Psychologists, PAMS Pre-Birth Team, Paramedics, Family Health Practitioners, Health Visitors, Infant Feeding Leads, Best Start in Life Advisors, Lead Safeguarding Midwives, Midwives, Maternity Support Workers, Mental Health Link Workers, GP’s, Neonatal Staff, Early Years Consultants

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Staff groups were registered to be able to access the online training content in sequence and were enrolled for the appropriate training strand. Once enrolled staff were able to access the training via the Eyes on the Baby online training platform. Staff had a ‘window’ of approximately 3 months to complete the training in order that the staged evaluation exercise could be concluded by the end of the project in March 2024. The training consisted mainly of video presentation and ‘test your knowledge’ quiz type activities. In addition, learners were introduced to a range of resources and tools to support their work with priority families and in implementing SUDI prevention. These tools included safe sleep guidance for parents and caregivers, a Decision Tree to help them decide what to do in a particular scenario and ‘What if’ prompts to help them to support a family in planning for unexpected events that might mean they are faced with out of routine arrangements including for safe sleep.

Training Uptake

A total of 804 staff created a learning account and logged in to the learning platform and 627 (78%) of these fully completed the training. In terms of strands Strand 2 was the largest group with 262 completions. Strand 3 was completed by 246 members of staff and Strand 1 had 119 completions. The most prevalent job roles represented in each strand are shown below. Strand 1 included Family Hub admin staff, customer services and birth registrars, Strand 2 included Family Hub and Family Help Practitioners and Strand 3 was dominated by Midwives and Health Visitors. This demonstrates excellent engagement levels across the three main Northumberland Family Hub partner organisations and gives confidence around the support we are able to provide to our priority families.



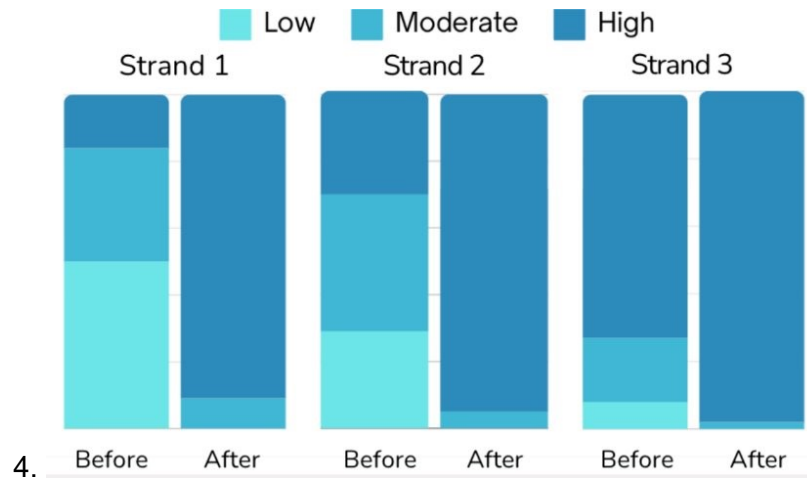
3.

Evaluation and Impact

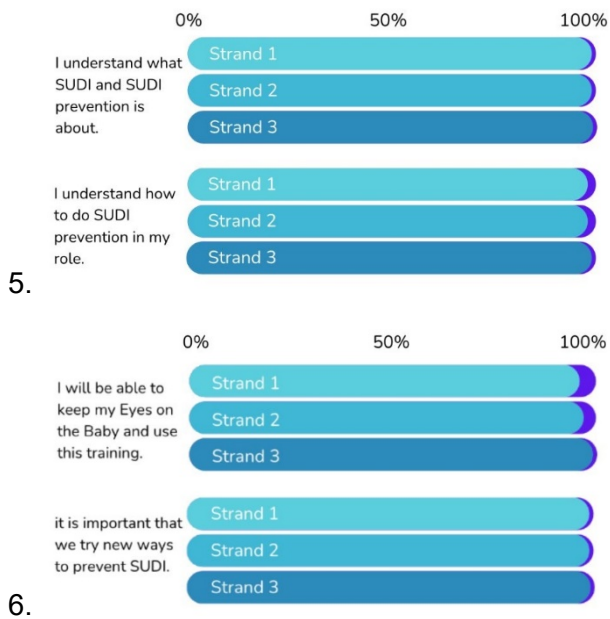
A full evaluation of the project and the learning outcomes can be found in the [Northumberland Eyes on the Baby End of Project Report](#) however it was particularly important to understand the shift in confidence and knowledge achieved by staff undertaking the learning and whether they recognised their role in SUDI prevention. Staff were asked to rate their knowledge of SUDI, ability to discuss SUDI with families, spot risks and take appropriate action. It was to be expected that Strand 3 staff (predominantly health professionals) would rate their knowledge of SUDI higher than other groups before embarking on the training, however scores across all three strands showed a substantial increase in post training confidence as shown on the next page:



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In terms of staff understanding their role in SUDI prevention and how they would be able to use their knowledge in their future practice, percentage scores across all strands were significantly high as shown in the graphic below:



Post training evaluation also included some qualitative feedback in the form of quotes from staff including the following examples:

“The training was spot on! I am very hopeful that this programme will make the difference in Northumberland that it aims to achieve. I will certainly keep my Eyes on the Baby” (Librarian).

“A very worthwhile programme. The extra knowledge I have gained will help me when asking parents and grandparents questions about their babies safe sleeping” (Family Hub Practitioner).



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“I really like the examples about how to talk to parents, to encourage discussion and how to phrase questions so that parents feel they can work with us and not feel judged at a time when they are already feeling vulnerable themselves. The resources provided are also great and will help both professionals and parents to embed safe sleep practices and make them the norm” (Housing Safeguarding Lead).

Marking the end of the project

On conclusion of the project an event was held to bring together the multi-agency partners who had contributed. The project findings were presented by Durham Infancy & Sleep Centre, and these were discussed in more detail. There were also workshop style activities focusing on how partners can continue and strengthen multi-agency work around SUDI Prevention and ensure that all Eyes are on the Baby within Northumberland.

Next Steps

The training content for all three strands has been shared by Durham Infancy and Sleep Centre, has been re-developed and is now hosted on Northumberland County Council's Learning Together Learning Management System. This will help us to ensure that all professionals who encounter priority families are equipped with the knowledge, confidence and tools to help ensure that we eliminate the possibility of unexplained deaths in infants within Northumberland.



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1. *Comined organisations logo.*
2. *A table detailing the level of the training based on the type of staff that may engage with the training.*
3. *A small anogram for the 3 strands and which roles might be involved in each.*
4. *A blue bar chart showing professional's confidence both before and after training.*
5. *Bar chart of understanding of SUDI across each of the 3 strands of training.*
6. *Bar chart of the trainees on the Eyes on the Baby training's remarks post training.*
7. *A Picture of 3 babies with the title EYES ON THE BABY at the bottom.*



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Family Hubs
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