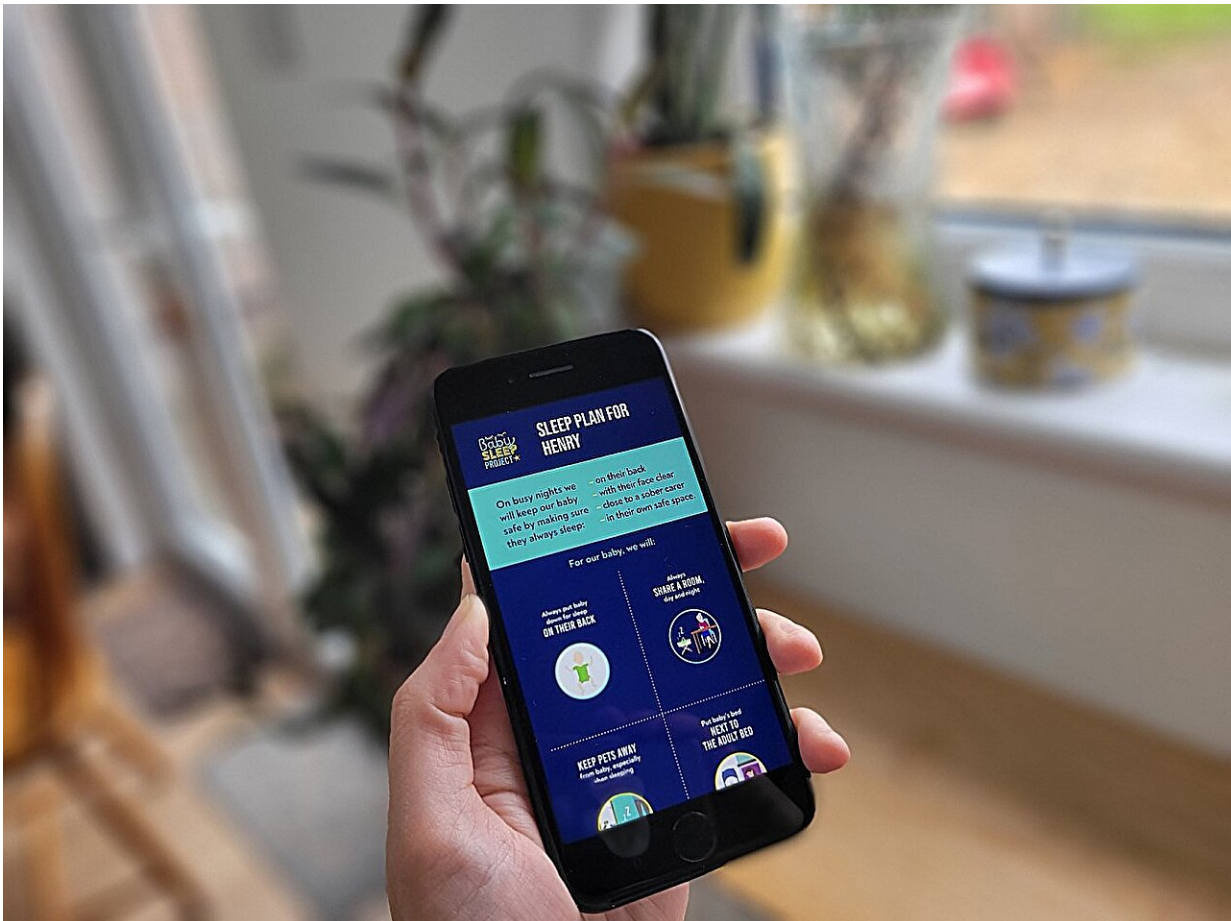


New baby sleep planner tool could help save babies lives at risk of sudden infant death

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Baby Sleep Planner app. Credit: University of Bristol

A new web-based baby sleep planner, developed by researchers at the

University of Bristol, could help save babies lives from sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS, a study suggests. The sleep planner tool is a new way to find out about babies risks and help keep them safe while sleeping. Although SIDS is rare, with one death in 3,000 to 4,000 births in England, this new tool could help reduce unexplained infant deaths.

The study, [published](#) in *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting*, found the sleep planner tool, which combines [risk assessment](#) and safety planning, has the potential to improve the uptake of life-saving advice for families with infants at increased risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI). The sleep planner tool, using advice from the Lullaby Trust, UNICEF and NICE, provides a baby's SUDI risk assessment at birth and a downloadable sleep plan for families.

While rates of SUDI declined steeply in the 1990s and to a lesser extent since, families living in the most deprived neighborhoods continue to experience a disproportionately higher rate. Last year, Bristol's [National Child Mortality Database](#) (NCMD) found that 42% of SUDIs occurred in deprived neighborhoods, compared with 8% in the least deprived.

The prototype baby sleep planner tool was tested by 22 [health professionals](#), including health visitors, midwives, and family nurses, 20 of whom were interviewed. The health professionals reported the tool allowed at-risk families to be identified for further support and improved their communication about risk with families. The testers suggested expanding the tool's use to include information during pregnancy and for it to be available in different languages.

The health professionals used the planner tool with 58 families. Twenty parents were interviewed by the research team about their experiences with the tool. Families were positive about the tool, appreciated the trustworthy information and felt it was useful, appropriate and the

individual baby sleep plans would be of benefit to them and other family members.

The study found the sleep planner tool, which combined risk assessment and safety planning, could improve the take up of life saving advice. Following the study's findings, improvements have been made to the tool, which will be evaluated in a larger study—opening shortly. If successful the tool could be rolled out to families with infants at increased risk of SUDI.

Dr. Anna Pease, Research Fellow in the Bristol Medical School: Population Health Sciences (PHS), and the study's corresponding author, said, "Our web-based tool identifies babies who may be at increased risk of SUDI. This risk assessment can be done at birth, to help health professionals know who to focus on with more safer sleep support. The tool also empowers families to understand their baby's needs and make a plan to keep them safe, which can be downloaded and shared with friends and family."

"Our study found health professionals and family members thought the tool was useful. Health professionals said it helped them to have better conversations about safer sleep and families said it helped them to understand why safer sleep was important and how it could keep their babies safe."

Peter Blair, Professor of Epidemiology and Statistics at Bristol Medical School (PHS), added, "We know the 'safer sleep' campaigns have saved the lives of thousands of babies. Although SIDS is rare, we know that many babies who have died in recent years have at least one known risk present in the sleep environment and that most of the babies who die are born into families experiencing the effects of poverty."

"We wanted to develop a web-based tool to help families follow safer

sleep advice, especially for those families with babies at increased risk. We hope our baby sleep [planner](#) tool can support families with babies at risk and help save lives."

More information: Anna Pease et al, A Risk Assessment and Planning Tool to Prevent Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy: Development and Evaluation of The Baby Sleep Planner, *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting* (2024). [DOI: 10.2196/49952](https://doi.org/10.2196/49952)

Provided by University of Bristol

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