



## **Guidance for Policy on Safe Sleep in Pre-school Services**

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## 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide pre-school services with the regulatory requirements for the specific policy on Safe Sleep, as set out by the [Child Care Act \(1991\) Early Years Services Regulations \(2016\)](#). This document provides the core requirements that should be addressed in this policy, as well as prompts and considerations that will support registered providers to ensure that their policy and procedures are fully developed and are reflected in the practices in their service.

The information in this document should be applied to the specific policy on Safe Sleep and the accompanying procedures of the pre-school service. This document should be read in conjunction with the [A Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services](#), the [Quality and Regulatory Framework](#) and the [Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months](#).

*This document is for reference only. It should not be assumed that the guidance provided is comprehensive or that it provides a definitive answer in every situation.*

Further resources are available in [Appendix 1](#).

## Regulatory Requirements of this Policy

### **Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Services Regulations (2016), Schedule 5. 1 (f)**

In relation to a pre-school service, the safe sleep policy means a policy specifying the manner in which safe and suitable sleeping arrangements are to be provided in the service for pre-school children attending the service.

## 2.0 Core policy requirements

A Policy Statement is recommended for this policy alongside the core requirements as set out further in this document. The safe sleep policy statement should set out the service's commitment to safeguarding children when they are sleeping and resting, and to providing safe and suitable environments where each child can sleep and rest as and when they need to. The policy statement should outline the service's commitment to promoting and implementing developmentally appropriate and child-centred sleep practices.

## Requirement 1

The policy describes the SIDS prevention guidance and protective measures for children under 12 months (as appropriate for the service).

### **Prompts and considerations** (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) That up-to-date best practice guidance in relation to SIDS prevention is always followed in the service.
- (b) That staff in the service are aware of and have received training in the following:
  - The risk factors for sleeping babies that can result in SIDS in pre-school services.
  - The protective factors known to significantly reduce the risk of SIDS occurring. Information on the risk and protective factors for SIDS is available at the [HSE](#), [First Light](#) and the [Lullaby Trust](#).
- (c) The specific and detailed procedures and protective actions that the service will take to address the known risks for SIDS.
- (d) Record keeping of actions taken to prevent SIDS from occurring.
- (e) The procedures in place to ensure that babies are fully supervised and monitored while sleeping including:
  - What is required of staff providing in-room supervision or carrying out frequent sleep checks.
  - Associated record keeping of sleep checks performed.
  - How the staff rota is organised so that sleeping babies can be supervised and physically checked at a minimum every 10 minutes.

## Requirement 2

The policy describes the procedures in place to ensure a safe, comfortable, supervised sleep environment for all sleeping children.

### Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) The sleep and rest facilities available in the service including the location of sleep rooms/areas.
- (b) That in a sessional service, rest requirements of each child within the 3.5-hour session is supported, according to each child's individual needs.
- (c) The measures in place for supervision and monitoring of sleeping children.
- (d) That child-led and child-centred sleep is provided for, and how this will be achieved in the service. The policy should state that the views of parents are welcomed and always considered when planning sleep provision for their child. *Planning for sleep provision should be a flexible and collaborative process between the service and each child's parents.*
- (e) If sleep facilities are separate from the care rooms, or if sleep is provided in a shared space, and how this will be safely managed.
- (f) That an adequate number of cots, beds and/or sleep mats are provided to ensure that all children have access to a suitable sleep or rest facility when they require sleep or rest.
- (g) That all children who require sleep and rest are provided with clean, safe, comfortable rest and/or sleep facilities that meet their individual needs.
- (h) The procedures to be followed in the service to ensure that:
  - The rest/sleep area is safe and free from any risks or hazards, and all sleep equipment and materials are safe, are in good condition, meet EU standards and are used in line with manufacturer's guidance and for the age range of children that they are deemed safe and suitable for.
  - The sleep/rest area is maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. This should also be reflected in the Infection Control policy.
  - Sleep equipment such as cots, mattresses, mats etc are in good condition and are maintained in a clean and hygienic manner.
  - Bedding is hygienic/laundered, stored appropriately in line with the infection control policy, labelled for use by an individual child and reserved for that child's sole use. Bedding is easily accessible to staff.
- (i) That staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities in relation to supervising and ensuring children's safety while they rest or sleep. Procedures are in place for the required adult: child ratio for the supervision of sleeping children and for conducting and recording frequent sleep checks.

### Requirement 3

The policy on safe sleep identifies prohibited equipment for sleeping children.

#### **Prompts and considerations** (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) The prohibited sleep equipment as set out in the [Quality and Regulatory Framework](#) and [Tusla's Sleep Guidance](#), and there is a stated commitment that such prohibited items are never used in the service.

### Requirement 4

The policy sets out the procedures for managing a sleep related emergency.

#### **Prompts and considerations** (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) That staff in the service are aware of and have received training in the actions required in the event that a sleeping baby is found unresponsive and/or not breathing.
- (b) That, at all times, there is at least one person in the service who is trained in First Aid Response and who is immediately available in this circumstance.

## 3.0 Best practice in developing & implementing a policy on safe sleep

In addition to the regulatory requirements for this policy as set out in this document, service providers can enhance the quality of practice in the implementation of the safe sleep policy in the service. In this section, best practice in this policy area is outlined and further information is signposted where available.

- Implementation of this policy should reflect Siolta standards, in particular Standard 9 [Health and Welfare](#).
- Sleep is a basic need, and children should never be deprived of sleep or rest when they require it.
- The duration of daytime sleep and naps for young children will vary for individual children -the [HSE](#) has general guidelines on the recommended duration of daytime naps for babies and young children, however a child's sleep and rest requirements will differ for each child and may be different on each day. Therefore, a flexible approach is recommended.

- It is recommended that safe sleep policies will include information on best practice to be shared with parents/guardians when developing individual sleep plans for children.
- Services should work in partnership with parents and guardians to ensure children have adequate sleep and rest provision during their day in a pre-school service.
- Services should always try to reflect as much as possible the child's sleep routine and preferences at home, while also acknowledging that children may be busier in the service and therefore, they may require slightly longer naps than when at home.
- Children can be supported to wake naturally, or they may be gently woken at a pre-determined time at the request of a parent/guardian. However, if on being woken, a child is showing signs that they have not had enough sleep (for example, the child may be distressed, irritable, struggling to stay awake, unable to partake in activities), this should be recorded, and discussed with parents. The child's nap times should then be adjusted as required to ensure they are getting enough sleep. This should be kept under review as the child grows and develops.
- If slings or swaddling are used, best practice guidance is followed, and they are used in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance.

## 4.0 Appendix

### 4.1 Supporting Information

- Aistear Siolta: [Practice Guide](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Baby Sleep Information Service](#) (UK)
- [Durham Infancy and Sleep Centre](#) (UK)
- HSE: [Where babies should sleep](#)
- HSE: [Cot Death](#)
- [NHS Choices](#) (UK)
- [Red Nose](#) (Australia)
- [Safe Sleep Scotland](#) (UK)
- [The Lullaby Trust](#) (UK)
- [UNICEF](#)

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