



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From Jackie Doyle-Price MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health,
Inequalities and Suicide Prevention

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Your Ref: 10179/CH

Our Ref: PFD-1158107



Ms Alison Mutch OBE
HM Senior Coroner, Manchester South
HM Coroner's Court
1 Mount Tabor Street
Stockport
SK1 3AG

10th January 2019

Dear Ms Mutch

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 November to Matt Hancock about the death of Savannah-Rose Michelle Owen. I am replying as Minister with responsibility for child health.

I have noted carefully the concerns in your report.

Firstly, I should clarify that nursing pillows are not classified as medical devices and are therefore outside the remit of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Safety regulation in this case is a matter for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and I note you have issued your report to the Secretary of State.

With regard to guidance given by health visitors and midwives on safe sleeping and nursing pillows, discussions with parents about safe sleeping are a part of maternity care, both antenatal and post-natal, as is the support offered by health visitors.

We know that health visitors and midwives are a trusted resource for parents. Health visitors and midwives are crucial in supporting a healthy pregnancy, safe birth and support for health and wellbeing for both the parents and child. This includes support for a healthy weight during pregnancy, breast feeding and safer sleeping advice, all of which can reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Health visitors and midwives receive in-depth training in pre- and post-registration development programmes, about SIDS and the evidence describing what works to reduce the incidence and minimise the risk of SIDS occurring. SIDS is multi-factorial. However, ensuring parents have the most recent evidence available can help to maintain the momentum in decreasing the number of babies dying. Health visitors and midwives advise and guide parents about safe sleep environments and work with parents regarding unsafe practices and how to reduce a risk to their baby, including the use of nursing pillows, supporting parents to make the safest choice for their baby.

We acknowledge it can be very difficult for parents to know which products are safe for their baby. Confusion around product safety was highlighted by a recent survey of new and expectant parents commissioned by The Lullaby Trust. 91 per cent of parents who responded stated compliance with safer sleep advice was a very important consideration when buying a product.

In March 2018, Public Health England (PHE) and The Lullaby Trust jointly published guidance to help new and expectant parents make safer choices when deciding on sleeping products for their baby¹. It aims to provide parents with some key pieces of advice when choosing sleeping products.

Safer Sleep Week is The Lullaby Trust's annual national awareness-raising campaign. It aims to make sure parents, carers and health professionals know the importance of safer sleep and are aware of how to reduce the risk of SIDS. The campaign this year runs 11-17 March 2019. PHE is working with The Lullaby Trust to develop new resources that will be showcased during Safer Sleep Week. PHE and The Lullaby Trust are collaborating and co-producing information sheets for parents and detailed fact sheets for professionals to further describe the evidence base for safer sleep spaces and drive down the incidence of SIDS.

Finally, other sources of advice for parents are the NHS' Start4Life Information Service for Parents², which provides information via email on keeping babies safe. This includes guidance on preventing SIDS, with links to further information online, including to the Lullaby Trust's website. In addition, the NHS Choices website contains factsheets on minimising the risk of SIDS^{3,4}, that include the importance of

¹ <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/The-Lullaby-Trust-Product-Guide.pdf>

² <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life>

³ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sudden-infant-death-syndrome/pages/introduction.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/reducing-risk-cot-death.aspx>.

using a baby mattress that is firm, flat, well-fitting, clean and waterproof on the outside, and that the mattress is covered with a single sheet. Parents are advised not to use duvets, quilts, baby nests, wedges, bedding rolls or pillows.

I hope this information is helpful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jackie', with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

JACKIE DOYLE-PRICE