

Reducing Health Inequalities Through Safer Sleep

Last month, Locala Health and Wellbeing took its safer sleep campaign directly into the heart of local communities across Kirklees and Calderdale. Through a series of events and outreach efforts, we supported families by providing practical advice on infant sleep safety, while addressing the wider issue of health inequalities affecting babies and young children.

Why Safer Sleep Is a Health Issue

Research shows that risks associated with sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) are not evenly distributed. Babies in deprived areas face higher risks due to a mix of social and environmental factors, including limited access to reliable health information, overcrowded or unstable housing, increased stress and financial pressures, and the persistence of outdated advice passed down through generations.

To break down these barriers, we brought our safer sleep support straight to local communities—using outreach events, face-to-face chats, and a mobile clinical van to reach families where they live.



Making Advice Accessible and Relevant

Rather than expecting families to seek out support, we made sure our campaign met them where they were. This approach meant:

- **Connecting with parents who might not regularly see healthcare professionals.**
- **Creating a welcoming, informal space for open conversations.**
- **Involving extended family members—especially grandparents, who often play a big role in infant care.**
- **Linking families to wider services that can help with housing, income, and wellbeing.**

Delivering tailored advice in familiar community spaces ensures that every parent and carer—regardless of their background—has access to trusted information that could help save lives.



Sharing Real-Life Experiences

Throughout the campaign, we engaged with families at various stages of early parenthood and from diverse backgrounds:

- Mothers and grandparents discussed protecting babies from sun exposure and avoiding covering prams with blankets, instead using pram umbrellas. Families preparing for holidays showed awareness by arranging travel cots to maintain safe sleep routines while away from home.
- Breastfeeding mothers with babies sleeping in Moses baskets alongside them expressed thoughtful plans about transitioning to cots and delaying moving babies into separate rooms, while exploring safe bed-sharing options like next-to-me cribs.
- Parents caring for very young babies were aware of safe sleep practices and car seat safety, with some opting against bed-sharing, especially when babies were born prematurely.
- When families planned to bed-share during holidays, advice was given to avoid this where risks were higher, recommending alternatives such as taking Moses baskets on trips.
- Pregnant mothers received guidance on how to safely bed-share and ensure a secure sleeping environment once their babies arrived.

- Families from a range of cultural backgrounds, including mums from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Iran, engaged actively, reflecting the campaign's broad community reach.

Key Insights and Impact

Parents generally demonstrated good knowledge of safer sleep in line with Lullaby Trust recommendations, though awareness of car seat safety guidelines was less consistent. The campaign provided free room thermometers, and where suitable, baby toothbrushes and toothpaste to support wider health needs.

Parents expressed gratitude for the information and conversations, valuing the campaign as a positive and informative experience. Additional resources such as DadPad were shared to engage fathers and promote their involvement.

Staff supporting asylum seeker families reported feeling more informed about SIDS risk reduction after engaging with the campaign. The team also addressed broader concerns, such as access to appropriate weaning foods for babies placed by the Home Office in hotels. Feedback highlighted Locala's effectiveness in reaching and supporting vulnerable communities, with this safer sleep campaign serving as a strong example of community outreach.

Why This Work Matters

SIDS remains one of the leading causes of unexpected infant death – but it is often preventable. Simple, consistent actions like placing babies on their backs to sleep, avoiding loose bedding in cots, and maintaining a safe sleep environment can significantly reduce risk. Ensuring that every family has access to this life-saving information is a crucial step in preventing avoidable harm and improving infant health outcomes.

Bringing Support Directly to Families

A key feature of the campaign was Locala's mobile clinical van, which provided an accessible, visible, and welcoming space in neighbourhoods where families live, shop, and spend time. This approach removed barriers such as appointment booking, enabling parents and carers to receive advice, ask questions, and find support whenever needed.

For more information, visit our [Health Inequalities and Inclusion page](#).

