

SUPPORTING SAFE SLEEP IN OUR COMMUNITY OF BREASTFEEDING FRIENDS

by Charlotte Treitl IBCLC

Since 2017, West Craven Breastfeeding Friends has been supporting local families with breastfeeding and parenting. We are a not for profit group, IBCLC led, with a team of volunteer peer supporters. Safe sleep is one of the major conversations we have with families. My experience in supporting families in this environment, and speaking with parents about safe sleep, it is apparent that the messages families receive from healthcare providers are either confusing, inaccurate or incomplete. Our goal has always been to empower parents to make informed, evidence based choices that allow them to continue to breastfeed. Below are some of the responses from BFFs members and the most common themes discussed during the interviews.

WHAT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE DID PARENTS HAVE?

"I was already suffering with post partum mental health issues manifesting as worries about SIDS amongst other things because my baby required resuscitation at birth. There was much more literature and advice supplied to me about SIDS than practical advice about general baby care! "

Focus on
SIDS

Had little to
no prior
knowledge of
safe
bedsharing

"I didn't really give it a lot of thought. I hadn't really considered bedsharing as I never knew it could be a safe option."

"I had a brief chat with the HV who just really told me about creating a 'c' around her but that was it. I had heard about the Lullaby Trust website on the antenatal course. Apart from that, not much at all."

Thought
bedsharing was
not
recommended
at all

"[I thought it was] not recommended. I didn't know there was a safe way to bedshare."

"My health visitor did give me guidelines on safe sleeping, which advised against bedsharing."

HOW DID OUR GROUP HELP BY SUPPORTING SAFE BEDSHARING?

"When I found out through BFFs how many people bedshared and that there were guidelines of how to do so safely, it allowed me to safely get more rest whilst maintaining the breastfeeding relationship that was so important to me".

Supports
continued
breastfeeding and
better sleep

"It has made the night feeds more manageable and comfortable and I'm sure I have had more sleep."

Supports
maternal
mental health

"[Bedsharing has] helped me get the sleep I need to care for my baby properly and recover emotionally and physically."

"I think it helps keep mums sane! Definitely helps mums mental health and maintains a healthy breastfeeding relationship"

Increased
confidence and
positive view of
bedsharing

"BFFs have definitely helped me feel more confident about safe bed sharing"

"Normalising bed sharing amongst [the] breastfeeding group is a good thing."

"I think it's really positive and allows parents to take a different approach to the way they parent."

Understood
the
guidelines

ALL THE PARENTS WHO RESPONDED TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE WERE ABLE TO IDENTIFY ALL 7 OF THE KNOWN CRITERIA FOR BEDSHARING SAFELY.

"It has helped as it made me consider how to put the guidelines into practice and be reassured by other mums"

"I felt my baby was actually safer and it was reassuring knowing that because he was breastfed and smoke and alcohol free in a safe environment his SIDS risk was actually very low"