



Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board

Safeguarding Bulletin

October 2014

Safe use of baby slings



In December 2013 a month old baby boy from Harrow, Greater London, was taken out by his parents for a shopping trip in a 'mobi' baby sling and on their return home they found that he was no longer breathing. An ambulance was immediately called and the baby was resuscitated and taken to local hospital before being transferred to Great Ormond Street Hospital for intensive treatment but sadly a couple of days later treatment was discontinued. As this was an unexpected death a coroner's inquest was undertaken and upon its conclusion the coroner deemed that cardiac arrest was caused by positional asphyxia but there was no evidence that the use of the sling was inappropriate or incorrect.

There appears to be a body of evidence that positional asphyxia can occur through use of baby slings. However, knowledge of this risk appears to be limited at present to academic circles and has not been widely researched.

If there is currently sufficient evidence to raise this risk to parents, then this information has not been publicised more widely. This unexpected death involving a sling is the second incident in Harrow in the past 18 months, with an earlier infant death in 2012 where a baby being carried in a similar sling was being carried by mother around the Natural History museum when she also discovered that her baby was no longer breathing and despite resuscitation attempts could not be revived at the scene. These two incidents have brought the issue of baby sling safety to local attention but also the first case was picked up by the national press:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2596584/Baby-died-mums-sling-Christmas-Eve-stroll-Infant-10-minute-walk-calm->

In cultures around the globe, people have been carrying their babies for centuries. Yet in much of the Western world it is a reviving art. Carrying babies in baby slings and carriers has grown in popularity in recent years, when used correctly it can soothe the baby while keeping the adult's hands free to get on with other things.



For help and support on the use of baby slings within the Portsmouth and Southsea area please contact:

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