

7 minute briefing - ICON



1 Background

CCS and the Safeguarding Partnership Boards in Luton, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and P'Boro have launched the ICON programme across the system. The incidence of abusive head trauma (AHT) is reflected in a number of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews in which babies have died or been seriously harmed. The ICON programme offers a systematic Public Health approach to supporting professionals to deliver key messages and interventions for parents to cope with a crying baby.

2 Why it matters

Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) – also known as 'shaken baby syndrome' – causes catastrophic brain injuries, which can lead to death, or significant long term health and learning disabilities. Abusive head trauma is the most common cause of death or long term disability in babies. 24 out of 100,000 hospital admissions for babies are due to abusive head trauma. 200 children are killed or hurt annually in the UK. These figures are likely to underestimate the real numbers involved. 70% of AHT is known to be caused by male carers. They are the most hard to reach by professionals to deliver the key messages.

3 Information

The programme – [ICON: Babies Cry, You Can Cope](#) – provides messages at key touchpoints and resources to let parents and all carers know that babies cry to communicate and that there are ways of coping with this crying. Resources include leaflets and video clips which can be shared with parents and all carers at any contact with midwives, health visitors, GPs, social workers, and other professionals who come into contact with families.

4 The ICON programme

The ICON programme recommends all parents and all carers to try soothing their crying baby with comforting methods and suggests sensitive parenting coping methods. Guidance supports parents and carers to put their baby down in a safe environment for a few minutes as a last resort when they are feeling frustrated and stressed.

...with a toolkit, including a 'crying plan' which they can complete with parents so they can plan in advance who to turn to for support if the crying becomes too much. ICON always recommends contacting a health professional such as a health visitor, midwife or GP for support with their baby and always recommends that the leaflet is given with a conversation to accompany it. Offer ICON as an alternative to a situation where frustration (often linked to tiredness) can lead to abusive head trauma.

6 What to do

Familiarise yourself with <https://iconcope.org/> and [local pages](#) for resources and information and attend training when available. Take the opportunity to raise awareness of ICON among colleagues. Talk through the key points in the ICON leaflet and the Crying Plan with parents and parents to be and encourage them to share the information with any family and friends who may care for their child.



7 Key Messages

- Infant crying is normal and it will stop
- Comforting methods will sometimes soothe the baby and the crying will stop
- Ok to walk away if you have checked the baby and the crying is getting to you
- Never shake or hurt a baby

