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To: all maternity units and neonatal operational delivery networks

02 April 2020

Dear Colleague

Safeguarding infants during the coronavirus pandemic: the ICON programme

We are writing on NHS England's behalf to ask for your help in preventing non-accidental injuries (NAI) to babies during the coronavirus pandemic. A six-minute discussion and provision of a simple leaflet will help families and will protect babies.

NAI is the leading cause of major trauma in young babies. Abusive head trauma is part of this, and the peak age at which it happens is around six to eight weeks old, which corresponds to the age at which children cry most persistently.

The accumulated stressors associated with the pandemic combined with prolonged isolation at home are predicted to cause a marked increase in the risk of abusive head trauma to infants within the next few weeks.

The perpetrator is most likely to be a parent and is more commonly male.

'ICON : babies cry, you can cope' is an intervention that helps young families and is endorsed by the Royal College of General Practice, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and National Children's Major Trauma Network.

We plan to implement the core of the ICON programme urgently, targeting new parents at the time of the birth, ensuring wherever possible that the fathers/male caregivers are included in the conversation.

We need your help by carrying out the following.



- Give every new parent, ideally mum and dad together, the ICON leaflet (attached).
- Somebody must read through it with them. This could be a midwife, health support worker or a volunteer.
- Direct parents/carers to photograph the leaflet, ideally the male attending the birth, so they have the information on their phone.
- The leaflet and information can be downloaded and printed from the ICON website www.iconcope.org. Parents/caregivers should be encouraged to access the website.

We understand how busy you are, but stress that this is an intervention that saves babies' lives. The provision of a leaflet is only part of the ICON programme, but in these extraordinary times we want at least this part of the programme to be delivered for parents/carers of babies as a matter of urgency.

We have an opportunity to protect young children from preventable harm through this simple intervention. Please do what you can to help.

Yours sincerely,

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