

Glossary

Apparent Life Threatening Event (ALTE) – A sudden, transient event during which an infant typically becomes relatively unresponsive and may become pale or blue and/or floppy. In some episodes infants may stop or seem to stop breathing, and the events are usually frightening to observers. These episodes usually resolve spontaneously or with minor stimulation, but some observers may feel the need to institute resuscitation if the event is prolonged or severe. In some cases a specific cause such as an infection, an underlying heart defect, severe gastro-oesophageal reflux, or a problem with the control of breathing or circulation is found, but many remain unexplained.

Autopsy – A post-mortem examination of a body carried out by a pathologist (paediatric or forensic). This involves an external examination of the body, followed by an internal examination of all body organs, along with the taking of tissue and other samples for further investigation.

Care of the Next Infant (CONI) – a scheme set up to provide support to bereaved parents following the birth of a subsequent child. Involves enhanced health visitor support, specific checks of the child, and advice to the parents on reducing risks, along with training in resuscitation skills. The CONI plus scheme extends the principles to other high-risk families.

Child Death Overview Panel (Child Death Review Team) – a multidisciplinary panel set up by the Local Safeguarding Children Board to review all deaths of children 0-18 years occurring in the Local Authority area, with a view to identifying those cases requiring a Serious Case Review, matters of concern affecting the safety and welfare of children, and wider public health or safety concerns arising from a particular death or pattern of deaths

Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH) – a national body established in 2003 to review maternal and child deaths with the aim of improving the health of mothers, babies and children. It took over the role of CESDI in 2003.

Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy (CESDI) – a confidential enquiry process established between 1992 and 2003 to investigate and review all stillbirths and infant deaths in England.

Coroner – a medical or legal practitioner appointed by the Crown to inquire into deaths from certain causes within the Local Authority area.

Cytogenetics – chromosome/DNA analysis, used to identify certain congenital and inherited diseases.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) – the government department responsible for education and all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and families. Replaced the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2007.

Epidemiology – the study of the patterns of disease and factors affecting the health and illness of whole populations

Family Liaison Officer – a police officer allocated to a family following a suspected murder or other possible major crime to gather information and support the family throughout the investigation.

Fibroblast culture – the culture of specific cells (fibroblasts) from skin or other tissues to provide a source of material for enzyme analysis for the diagnosis of inborn errors of metabolism .

Fraenum (frenum, frenulum; pl fraenae, frenulae) – a thin bridge of tissue, connecting the lip with the gum (upper and lower labial fraenae) and the tongue with the floor of the mouth (lingual fraenum). A torn fraenum may result from non-intentional injury, or may be an indication of physical abuse through a direct blow or through practices such as force feeding

Fundoscopy – observation of the retina (back of the eye) using an ophthalmoscope.

Histology – the microscopic study of tissues.

Incidence - the frequency of new occurrences of a disease or condition within a defined time interval for a defined population (usually expressed as a number of cases per 1000 or million population per year).

Infant mortality rate - number of deaths at ages under one year, per 1,000 live births.

Inquest – the statutory inquiry into the nature and circumstances of a death, carried out by a coroner. The Coroners Act 1988 requires that coroners hold inquests into certain groups of deaths, including violent or unnatural deaths, sudden deaths of which the cause is unknown and into deaths in prison.

Kennedy Report (2004) – Sudden unexpected death in infancy. The report of a working group convened by the Royal College of Pathologists and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy. [Available at: www.RCPCH.ac.uk]

Kennedy Report (2001) – The report of the public inquiry into children's heart surgery at the Bristol Royal Infirmary 1984 -1995. Led by Sir Ian Kennedy. HM Government, 2001, CM 5207. [www.bristol-inquiry.org.uk]

Lividity/Livido – the pooling of blood in body tissues post mortem. This gives rise to a purple-red discolouration in dependent areas of the body. Typically this will be on the back in infants/children who have been found in a supine position. Within this, there may be areas of blanching where there has been direct pressure on the skin. Livido starts to develop within 1-2 hours of death, and becomes fixed after 4-6 hours, though this may occur more quickly in small infants.

Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) – a statutory multi-agency body in each Local Authority area, established to oversee arrangements for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children in that area. Replaced Area Child Protection Committees (ACPCs) following the Children Act 2004.

Medical certificate of the cause of death – a statutory form, completed by a doctor, giving details of a deceased person, and a classified cause of death. The cause of death is classified at 2 levels: I (further subdivided into Ia, Ib, and Ic) listing conditions directly leading to death; and II listing other factors that may have contributed to the death. A doctor is required to complete a death certificate where he or she has been involved in provision of care to the deceased in the 14 days before death, is able to confirm the cause of death, and where the death does not require reporting to the coroner.

Mortality - Number of deaths per unit of population within a given period of time. Usually expressed as deaths per 100,000 population per year

Neonatal mortality rate - number of deaths at ages under 4 weeks, per 1,000 live births.

Pathologist – a doctor specially trained in the study of disease processes; paediatric pathologists have had further training specifically in paediatric disease; forensic pathologists are specially trained to investigate deaths from suspicious circumstances.

Perinatal mortality rate - number of stillbirths plus number of deaths at ages under 1 week, per 1,000 live births and stillbirths.

Petechiae – small, pin-point haemorrhages in the skin or on the surface of body organs. These do not blanch when compressed beneath a glass. They indicate the rupture of tiny capillaries. Petechiae may result from direct injuries, bleeding disorders or various disease processes.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 (PACE) – The Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the PACE Codes of Practice provide the core framework of police powers and safeguards around stop and search, arrest, detention, investigation, identification and interviewing detainees.

Postneonatal mortality rate - number of deaths at ages 28 days and over but under one year, per 1,000 live births.

Prevalence - the total number of individuals suffering from a disease or condition in a given population at a specific time.

Prone – lying on the front.

Rapid Response Process – an interagency response to the unexpected death of a child, to establish where possible the cause of death, identify contributory factors and provide ongoing support to the family

Rigor mortis – a generalized stiffness of the muscles developing post-mortem. Rigor mortis typically develops from 1-2 hours following death.

Section 47 – Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 places a duty on the local authority to conduct an inquiry if they "have reasonable cause to suspect that a child ... in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm".

Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) – a police officer of detective inspector rank or above who takes the lead in investigating any suspected murder.

Serious Case Review (Part 8 Review) – an in depth review of a death occurring as a result of abuse or neglect in order to learn and act on lessons in relation to the way professionals and organizations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

Skeletal survey – a radiological examination of all bones in the body. This requires multiple x-ray films to be taken. The skeletal survey is an important part of the post-mortem investigation of all sudden unexpected deaths in infancy, and in unexpected deaths in older children where there are suspicions of trauma.

Standardised mortality ratio (SMR) - ratio of the observed number of deaths in a given population compared to the expected number of deaths based on the age profile of the population, expressed as a percentage. An SMR of 100 implies the population has the same mortality as the general population; >100 implies an increased risk of death and <100 a lower risk

Strategy Discussion – a multi-agency discussion or meeting involving children’s social services and police, with or without representatives of other agencies, to share information about and plan the investigation into possible cases of child abuse or neglect.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) –the sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history and circumstances of death.

Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) – unexpected deaths up to one year of age (some of which will subsequently be fully explained and some will be SIDS).

Supine – Lying on the back.

Tissue Blocks – Small samples taken at autopsy from various body tissues. Typically these are no bigger than a British 10p coin (or a 1€) in area and up to 4-5mm in thickness. The samples are fixed in formalin and then processed to produce paraffin wax blocks. Thin sections from these blocks are cut, mounted on glass slides and stained with dyes to examine the cellular detail under the microscope.

Unexpected death - the death of a child which was not anticipated as a significant possibility 24 hours before the death or where there was a similarly unexpected collapse leading to or precipitating the events which led to the death

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006) – Statutory guidance for all agencies involved in protecting children and promoting their welfare.