Unexpected Death in Childhood is a rare occurrence in the western world. These deaths may occur as a result of sudden illness, accidents, or through maltreatment. Whatever the cause, each death is a tragedy for the family and all those involved with them.

Professionals from all the caring agencies have a responsibility to help those families, offering support, investigating the cause of death, providing information, and above all seeking to prevent deaths in the first place.

Sadly, the trauma experienced by families is all too often exacerbated by inappropriate or incompetent professional responses. The devastating consequences of getting it wrong have been clearly highlighted in recent court of appeal cases where previous convictions have been overturned. Both families and professionals suffer as a result. In the words of Baroness Helena Kennedy, “it is every family’s right to have their baby’s death properly investigated”. However, this is an area where professionals often feel ill equipped and unprepared.

Unexpected Death in Childhood explores the new guidelines and legislation in the UK that have placed further responsibilities on agencies to work together to review all child deaths and to respond appropriately to unexpected deaths in childhood. It is split into three sections; Understanding Childhood Death, Responding when a child dies and Learning lessons. The first section provides essential background knowledge on the causes and patterns of childhood death, drawing extensively from the most up to date scientific literature. Part two provides practitioners with the skills needed to respond to unexpected childhood deaths in a systematic yet sensitive manner. The final section covers processes needed to learn lessons from childhood deaths. Various practical tools and protocols are provided as appendices which are also available on the companion website (insert website address here).
many professionals finding themselves having to put procedures in place with little training or experience, this handbook is essential in providing practical advice.

*Unexpected Death in Childhood* is part of the NSPCC Wiley series in Safeguarding Children – The Multi-Professional Approach

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**Peter Sidebotham** is a Consultant Senior Lecturer in Child Health at the University of Warwick. His main clinical interests are in child protection, sudden unexpected death in infancy and child development and disability. During seven years in Bristol, Dr Sidebotham helped to build up an internationally-acclaimed clinical and academic service for sudden unexpected deaths in infancy. Since moving to Warwickshire, he has built on this experience to work with colleagues in developing a local service of responding to unexpected childhood deaths. He is a council member with the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths and sits on the child protection standing committee of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Dr Sidebotham is the director of the Warwick Advanced Course in the Management of Unexpected Childhood Death. He is heading up a research team with ongoing research into child death review processes.

**Peter Fleming** is Professor of Infant Health and Developmental Physiology at the University of Bristol. His clinical practice is in the fields of newborn intensive care, developmental assessment and investigation and care of children with sleep-related disorders, particularly involving breathing. His research is in the areas of developmental physiology, mother/baby interactions (particularly during sleep) and large-scale studies of factors contributing to sudden death in infants. He also has a particular clinical and research interest in the provision of bereavement care to parents after the death of a baby or child. He is a world leader in research into sudden unexpected death in infancy and has published extensively on this and other topics. He has won numerous awards for his work, including a CBE awarded for services to the understanding and prevention of cot deaths. Professor Fleming is a member of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Neonatal Society, the British Association of Perinatal Medicine, the British Sleep Society and the Paediatric Intensive Care Society.

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