

Contributory Factors Guidance

How to use this document

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Domain A - Factors intrinsic to the child

Domain A: Child health history/medical conditions

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Prematurity	The child was born before 37 weeks gestation.
Low birth weight	The child was born at low birth weight less than 2500g.
Bottle-fed	The child was bottle-fed. Specify timescales e.g., at the time of death.
Breast-fed	The child was breast-fed. Specify timescales e.g., at the time of death.
Acute/sudden onset illness	Each acute/sudden onset illness should be recorded and graded as a separate factor. Specify in the free text what the illness was e.g., Infection, Kawasaki disease, acute nephritis, intestinal volvulus, diabetic ketoacidosis, acute asthma, intussusception, appendicitis, epilepsy.
Chronic health condition	Each chronic health condition should be recorded and graded as a separate factor. Specify in the free text what the condition was e.g., Crohn's disease, cerebral palsy, liver disease, immune deficiencies, child obesity.
Malignancy/cancer	Each malignancy should be recorded and graded as a separate factor. Specify in the free text the type of malignancy e.g., Solid tumours, leukaemias, lymphomas.
Congenital/genetic/chromosomal condition	Each congenital/genetic/chromosomal condition should be recorded and graded as a separate factor. Specify in the free text what the condition was e.g., Trisomies, other chromosomal disorders, single gene defects, neurodegenerative disease, cystic fibrosis, and other congenital anomalies including cardiac.
Child not fully immunised (regardless of reason)	The child was not fully immunised, regardless of the reason why.

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Domain A: Risk factors in mother during pregnancy/delivery

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Twin/multiple pregnancy	The child was born following a multiple pregnancy (e.g., twins/triplets etc). Specify in the free text the number of babies.
Assisted conception	The child was conceived via assisted conception. Specify in the free text e.g., IVF, ovulation induction only, intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection, artificial insemination with or without ovulation induction.
High maternal BMI	Mother was assessed as having a high Body Mass Index .
Low maternal BMI	Mother was assessed as having a low Body Mass Index .
Smoking in pregnancy	Mother smoked during pregnancy. <i>Record other smoking related factors under Domain B: Smoking/alcohol/substance misuse/use by a parent/carer.</i>
Substance misuse in pregnancy	Mother misused substances during pregnancy. <i>Record other substance misuse related factors under Domain B: Smoking/alcohol/substance misuse/use by a parent/carer.</i>
Alcohol misuse in pregnancy	Mother misused alcohol during pregnancy. <i>Record other alcohol related factors under Domain B: Smoking/alcohol/substance misuse/use by a parent/carer.</i>
Perinatal mental health condition	A mental health issue or condition that occurs during pregnancy or in the first year following the birth of the child.

Maternal diabetes/gestational diabetes	Mother has a diagnosis of diabetes or gestational diabetes.
Maternal age	Mother's age is a potential contributory factor in the vulnerability, ill health or death of the child e.g., Mother is a teenager or Mother is over 40 years old during pregnancy.
Maternal infection	Mother had an infection during pregnancy or delivery. Specify in the free text the type of infection e.g., chorioamnionitis.
Late booking/concealed pregnancy	Antenatal care was delayed or did not occur due to late booking or concealed pregnancy. Record the reason for late booking/concealed pregnancy in the free text, if known.
Other obstetric complications	Other obstetric complications not covered in the above factors e.g., pre-eclampsia, history of previous miscarriage or stillbirth, prolonged and/or preterm rupture of membranes.
Delivery complications	Other delivery complications not covered in the above factors e.g., breech delivery, shoulder dystocia.

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Domain A: Child's developmental conditions/disabilities

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Learning disability	The child was diagnosed with a learning disability.
Sensory impairment	The child was diagnosed with a sensory impairment.
Motor impairment	The child was diagnosed with a motor impairment e.g., the child was a wheelchair user.
Other developmental impairment or disability	The child was diagnosed with another developmental impairment or disability. <i>Do not include congenital, genetic or chromosomal conditions, which should be recorded under subgroup Domain A: Congenital/genetic/chromosomal condition.</i>
Neurodevelopmental conditions	The child was diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental condition. Each neurodevelopmental condition should be recorded and graded as a separate factor. Specify in the free text what the condition was e.g., autism, ADHD.

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Domain A: Emotional/behavioural factors

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Mental health condition	The child was diagnosed with a mental health condition. Each mental health condition should be recorded and graded as a separate factor. Specify in the free text what the condition was e.g., depression, anxiety, eating disorder.
Risk-taking behaviour	The child displayed risk-taking behaviours e.g., speeding, previous suicide attempts, self-harm. <i>Excludes: substance/alcohol misuse (record under Domain A: Smoking/alcohol/substance use/misuse by the child) and suicidal or self-harm ideation (record under subgroup Suicidal or self-harm ideation below).</i>
Suicidal or self-harm ideation	The child was known to experience previous suicidal or self-harm ideation. <i>Suicidal attempts and self-harm should be recorded above, under subgroup Risk-taking behaviour.</i>
Poor or non-compliance with medication	Evidence that the child did not comply with medication regime for any reason.
Sexual orientation/identity or gender identity	Relating to sexual orientation/identity or gender identity.

Loss of key relationships	The child had lost one or more key relationships in their life e.g., due to bereavement, relationship breakdown, moving school or home.
Isolation from friends/family/support	The child was isolated from friends or family or lacked social support.
Child was victim of bullying	Factors relating to the child being bullied by another child, including online or face to face. <i>Physical/Emotional abuse by an adult should be recorded under Domain B: Domestic or child abuse/neglect.</i>
Social media/internet use	Factors relating to social media/internet use having an impact on the child's behaviour or emotional wellbeing. This may include social media trends and videos promoting self-harm. Specify in the free text the platform(s) used, if known.

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Domain A: Smoking/alcohol/substance use/misuse by the child

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Child consumed alcohol on day of death	The child consumed alcohol on the day of their death.
Child consumed alcohol regularly/known to binge drink	The child consumed alcohol regularly or was known to 'binge drink'.
Child consumed drugs on day of death	The child consumed drugs on the day of their death. Record in the free text which drug(s) the child consumed.
Child was known to be a regular drug user	The child was known to be a regular drug user. Record in the free text what drugs the child was known to use.
Child smoked tobacco/e-cigarettes	The child was known to smoke tobacco or e-cigarettes. Specify which in the free text.

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Domain A: Other

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Other	Any other factor intrinsic to the child, not covered above.

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Domain B - Factors in social environment including family and parenting capacity

Domain B: Smoking/alcohol/substance misuse/use by a parent/carer

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Parent/carer had consumed alcohol around the time of child's death	The parent(s) or carer(s) had consumed alcohol around the time of the child's death.

Parent/carer known for alcohol misuse	The parent(s) or carer(s) were known to misuse alcohol.
Parent/carer had consumed drugs around the time of child's death	The parent(s) or carer(s) had consumed drugs around the time of the child's death. Include prescription medication if relevant and details of whether there had been a recent change in the dosage of any prescription medication taken.
Parent/carer known for substance misuse	The parent(s) or carer(s) were known for substance misuse. Record in the free text which drugs the parent(s)/carer(s) were known to take.
Parent/carer smoked tobacco/e-cigarettes in the household	The parent(s) or carer(s) were known to smoke tobacco or e-cigarettes in the household. Record in the free text which type of cigarettes the parent(s)/carer(s) smoked e.g., tobacco or e-cigarettes. <i>Smoking during pregnancy should be recorded under subgroup Domain A: Smoking in pregnancy.</i>

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Domain B: Challenges for parents with access to services

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Parental non-engagement with any service	Evidence of non-engagement from parent(s) or carer(s), regardless of reason. This includes all services and includes where there were challenges for parents in accessing relevant services e.g., transport links, poverty. Includes non-engagement over a period of time (rather than a single occasion). <i>Additional social or service provision factors should also be recorded within the relevant domains. Late booking/concealed pregnancy should be recorded under subgroup Domain A: Late booking/concealed pregnancy.</i>
Child was not brought to appointment(s)/did not attend	The child was not brought to one or more appointments e.g., with a healthcare provider, social worker or other professional.
Evidence of disguised compliance by parents in any service	Evidence of parent(s) or carer(s) appearing to co-operate with professionals in order to allay concerns and stop professional engagement.
Delay in seeking/failure to seek medical support	The parent(s) or carer(s) delayed seeking or did not seek medical support, regardless of reason.

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Domain B: Domestic or child abuse/neglect

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Child was subject to physical abuse, by an adult	The child was subject to physical abuse by an adult. <i>Bullying by another child should be recorded under subgroup Domain A: Child was victim of bullying.</i>
Child was subject to sexual abuse, by an adult	The child was subject to sexual abuse by an adult.
Child was subject to emotional abuse, by an adult	The child was subject to emotional abuse by an adult.
Child was subject to neglect, by an adult	The child was subject to neglect by an adult.
Other known domestic violence/abuse in the household	There was domestic violence/abuse in the household of the child. If known, record whether the child was involved in the domestic abuse, witnessed it directly, or witnessed the aftermath of the violence.

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Domain B: Household functioning, parenting/supervision

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Complex home circumstances	Child was living in complex home circumstances not covered in the subgroups above e.g., living between multiple households, dealing with family members with physical and/or mental health conditions e.g., as a young carer, financial instability.
Lack of appropriate supervision	There was not appropriate supervision of the child at the time of the event leading to death e.g., young child unsupervised in a bath. <i>Domestic abuse and neglect should be recorded under Domain B: Domestic or child abuse/neglect.</i>

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Domain B: Poverty and deprivation

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Income deprivation	This includes low income due to people out of work, sick, retired or on maternity leave and those in work but who have low earnings, as well as deprivation caused by low income – rent arrears, fuel poverty, lack of heating, lighting and hot water, inadequate furniture, clothes and household equipment, debts, inability to pay bills, afford transport, to afford leisure activities, food insecurity and food bank use, lack of toys, books, etc.
Employment deprivation/unemployment	This includes inability to work due to unemployment, maternity, sickness or disability, or due to caring responsibilities.
Health deprivation & disability	This includes factors related to poor health in family members, disability or mental illness.
Barriers to services	This includes factors related to availability to local services (e.g., GP surgeries or education), or limited access to services, geographical barriers, wider barriers (i.e. affordability). <i>Uncommissioned services should be recorded under subgroup Domain D: Service uncommissioned/unfunded/unavailable.</i>

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Domain B: Social care

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Child on child protection plan at time of death	The child was on a child protection plan at the time of their death.
Child on child in need plan at time of death	The child was on a child in need plan at the time of their death.
Child was a looked after child at time of death	The child was a looked after child at the time of their death.
Child was previously known, but not an open case	The child was previously known to social care in any way, but not at the time of their death. Specify in the free text how and when the child was known to social care.
Child was a refugee/asylum seeker	The child was a refugee or asylum seeker at the time of their death.
Parent/carer was a care leaver	The parent or carer was a care leaver.
Other social care factors	Other factors relating to social care that are not covered above.

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Domain B: Cultural factors

Subgroup	Guidance notes
English not parents' first language	English was not the parents' first language. Also record any issues with interpreter/communication services under Domain D: Communication with family .
Parents are/were refugees/asylum seekers	The parent(s) or carer(s) of the child are or were refugees or asylum seekers.
Close relative marriage (consanguineous)	The parents are related to each other as second cousins or closer. Factors relating to availability of/referral to genetic counselling should be recorded under Domain D: Following guidelines/pathway/policy .

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Domain B: Parent/carer's health

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Mental health condition in a parent/carer	The parent or carer was diagnosed with a mental health condition e.g., depression, anxiety, eating disorder. Perinatal mental health conditions should be recorded under subgroup Domain A: Perinatal mental health condition .
Physical health condition in a parent/carer	The parent or carer has a diagnosis of a physical health condition. Record health conditions in the mother relating to pregnancy under Domain A: Risk factors in mother during pregnancy/delivery .
Disability in a parent/carer	The parent or carer has a diagnosed disability.
Learning disability in a parent/carer	The parent or carer has a diagnosed learning disability.

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Domain B: School/peer groups

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Exclusion/suspension from school	The child was excluded or suspended from school at any time.
Truancy/poor attendance record	The child had involvement with an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) or there is agency information relating to multiple episodes of truancy.
Gang/knife crime	The child had involvement with gang or knife crime.
Drug use in peer group	Drug use culture present within the child's peer group.
Other school/peer group related factor	Other school or peer group related factor, not listed above.

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Domain B: Other

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Other	Any other social environment factor, not covered above.

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Domain C - Factors in the physical environment

Domain C: Sleep environment

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Unsafe sleeping arrangements	The child's sleeping arrangements were considered by professionals to be unsafe. Specify factors in the free text, including factors relating to the environment the child was sleeping in, e.g., sleeping position, toys/cushions/items in the cot, high room temperature, sleeping surface. This includes circumstances where multiple risk factors for SIDS are present together. <i>Record factors relating to house conditions under Domain C: Home safety/conditions, deprivation factors under Domain B: Poverty and Deprivation, and any smoking/alcohol/substance use (both prior use and at the time of death) under Domain B: Smoking/alcohol/substance misuse/use by a parent/carer.</i>
Co-sleeping	Where the sleeping surface was shared with another person. Co-sleeping on its own does not constitute an unsafe sleep environment. It is only a risk when combined with other factors e.g., smoking or drug/alcohol use. <i>Record alcohol/substance use (both prior use and at the time of death) by person sharing sleep surface under Domain B: Smoking/alcohol/substance misuse/use by a parent/carer.</i>

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Domain C: Home safety/conditions

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Overcrowded living conditions	The environment where the child was living was overcrowded.
Dirty, mouldy or property in poor repair	The environment where the child was living was unclean or in a poor state of repair.
Unsafe appliances/environment	The home environment, or appliances within it, was unsafe. Include also unsafe environment or appliances in another private residence e.g., grandparents' house. Specify in the free text e.g., uncovered pond, free-hanging blind/curtain cords, stacked stairgates, no lock on windows, no working fire alarms.
Attack by pets/animal	Factors relating to an attack by a pet or animal.
Living environment deprivation/homelessness	The home environment of the child was inadequate due to deprivation factors.

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Domain C: Vehicle collision

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Speeding vehicle/recklessness	Factors relating to dangerous driving or recklessness, regardless of whether the child was the driver, passenger or pedestrian. <i>In instances where the child was speeding, this should be recorded under subgroup Domain A: Risk-taking behaviour.</i>

Young child not appropriately restrained in car seat/booster seat	Factors where the child was not appropriately restrained in a car or booster seat. Includes improper use, or no use of car seat/booster seat.
Child not using other appropriate safety equipment	Factors where the child was not using appropriate safety equipment e.g., bicycle helmet, seatbelt, lights.
Unsafe road conditions	Factors relating to unsafe road conditions e.g., weather conditions, road camber, smart motorway, lighting, poor condition, no pedestrian path, dangerous turn with poor visibility.
Other factors	Other factors relating to vehicle collisions, not covered above.

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Domain C: Public safety

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Absent/non-visible warning signs	There were no or unclear warning signs e.g., water body with no signalling.
Unsafe street furniture/public equipment	Factors relating to unsafe public equipment e.g., unsafe playground, defective fences.
Availability of safety equipment	Factors relating to the availability or repair of safety equipment e.g., life-ring, defibrillator, buoyancy aids.
Accessible railway tracks/other infrastructure	Factors relating to accessible railway tracks or other public infrastructure e.g., bridges, buildings.
Accessible water	There was easily accessible water in a public environment (e.g., public swimming pools, holiday let ponds or pools).
Poor compliance with health & safety regulations	Factors relating to a service to the public where there was poor compliance with health and safety regulations.
Other public safety factor	Other factors relating to the safety of the public, not covered above.

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Domain C: Other

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Other	Any other physical environment factor, not covered above.

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Domain D - Factors in service provision

Domain D: Initiation of treatment/identification of illness

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Issue in diagnosis	Delay in diagnosis of a condition in the child. <i>Factors relating to treatment should be recorded under subgroup Issue with treatment, including delays, below.</i>

Issue with availability of information	Lack of availability of information, or delay in access to information needed to treat the child e.g., test or scan results.
Issue with treatment, including delays	Issues relating to the treatment the child received for their condition e.g., delay in starting treatment, side effects or complications developed as a result of treatment, or medical or surgical error.
Lack of recognition of deteriorating child/clinical symptoms/signs	Factors relating to recognition of the clinical symptoms and signs of deterioration.
Lack of escalation for senior review	Evidence of a failure to escalate concerns to a senior professional for any reason. <i>Documentation issues should also be recorded under subgroup Domain D: Poor documentation/record keeping.</i>

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Domain D: Following guidelines/pathway/policy

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Guideline/policy/pathway available but not followed	Factors relating to instances where local or national guidance was available but this was not followed, for any reason.
Guideline/policy/pathway unclear or unavailable	Factors relating to unclear or unavailable local or national guidance or policies.
No referral/assessment/review undertaken	Factors relating to instances where there was no referral, assessment or review within any organisation.
Poor quality referral/assessment/review	Factors relating to instances where there was poor quality referral, assessment or review performed within any organisation.
Delayed referral/assessment/review	Factors relating to a delay in patient being appropriately referred, assessed or reviewed within any organisation.

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Domain D: Access to appropriate services

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Issue with or lack of transfer of child	Factors where there was an issue related to transfer of the child either within a hospital, between hospitals or from home to hospital e.g., by ambulance service.
Child not born in appropriate setting	The child was not born in a setting appropriate to their needs, regardless of reason. <i>Issues with capacity should also be recorded under Domain D: Staffing/bed capacity/equipment.</i>
Service uncommissioned/unfunded/unavailable	Factors relating to any service that was unavailable for the child/family before or after death e.g., due to Covid/geographical challenges or referral criteria.
Availability/accessibility of medication	Issue with the supply or accessibility of medication for any organisation. Record details of the problem in the free text box.
Transition between paediatric and adult services	Factors in any service relating to how the child was transitioned between child and adult services.

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Domain D: Staffing/bed capacity/equipment

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Staffing capacity or inappropriate skill mix	Factors relating to staffing shortages, capacity or skill mix of staff, fatigue caused by excessive working hours, in all services (before or after death).
Bed/cot capacity	Factors relating to the bed or cot capacity of an organisation.
Equipment related issues	Factors relating to any equipment issues, including supply of equipment, regardless of reason.

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Domain D: Communication within or between agencies

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Poor communication/ information sharing within an agency	Factors relating to communication within an organisation.
Poor communication/ information sharing between agencies	Factors relating to communication between organisations.
Poor documentation/ record keeping	Factors relating to poor written documentation/record keeping e.g., incomplete records, illegible handwriting etc.

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Domain D: Communication with family

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Poor communication between professionals & family	Factors relating to poor communication between professionals and the family, before or after death. This can include concerns raised by the family or patient that were not addressed.
Poor information sharing with family	Factors relating to lack of appropriate information sharing with family, before or after the child's death e.g., advice on safe sleeping, smoking cessation, genetics, bereavement support etc.
Information provided to parents was inappropriate	Factors where information was shared but the information was not appropriate for the family, before or after the child's death e.g., information was difficult to read due to language barriers.
Lack of interpreter availability/use/suitability	Inappropriate or no use of professional interpreters for each contact with the child/family. Include if the child themselves acted as an interpreter.

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Domain D: Other

Subgroup	Guidance notes
Other	Any other service provision factor, not covered above.

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