

## WHY DID OUR BABY DIE?

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A Heartbroken couple want to know why their baby died. An inquest found Dan Curtis and Carrie Hick's two-month-old daughter Charlotte died of cot death.

A pathologist said the only known risk factor was the fact that her parents and grandfather, who lived with them, were all smokers.

But the family from Down Ampney deny ever smoking in front of Charlotte or their other daughters, Josie, three, and Sophia, two.

They say vaccinations given to the baby the week before she died could be responsible.

Charlotte, who was born on May 13 last year, had a combined jab for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio, along with Hib meningitis and meningitis C vaccinations.

Carrie, 22, said: "Viral meningitis showed on Charlotte's autopsy but the final results came through as cot death.

"We're wondering if the vaccinations caused her death. She had them on Tuesday and she died the following Monday.

"More babies suffer from cot deaths in their first two to four months and that's when they have these injections."

Carrie and Dan live with Dan's father, David, who added: "It could have been a bad batch of vaccinations. We don't know what to believe - but they're not going to tell us."

Carrie found Charlotte dead in her cot at 7.30am on July 17.

She said: "The day before, Charlotte was fine. She'd drunk all her milk and had her daily feed before I put her to bed at the usual time - between 9pm and 10pm.

"Dan slept downstairs because Josie was in our bed. I found Charlotte the following morning. When I woke at 7.30am I thought, 'Hang on, she usually wakes up at 6am

for her feed'.

"I noticed she had some blood coming from her nose. She wasn't moving or breathing and I screamed for Dan.

"We were trying to resuscitate her and I was screaming down the phone to the ambulance service asking, 'Where are the paramedics?'

"They took 15 minutes to arrive. We kept doing resuscitation but there was no sign of life.

"Deep down we knew she'd gone but didn't want to believe it.

"When the paramedics came we thought there could still be a chance, but they did resuscitation for half an hour and then rang the police."

Carrie denied smoking had affected her baby. She said: "If we had a fag we'd go into the kitchen and open a window or go outside. So did everyone else.

"We didn't want any of the children breathing in smoke and we didn't smoke in the car if the girls were there. We even had 'no smoking' signs on the door."

Charlotte wasn't planned but her parents were happy with the pregnancy.

Carrie said: "Everything was all right after the birth. She was a healthy, bubbly baby."

Dan added: "She was quiet and she was always smiling at you."

At the inquest, pathologist Dr Phillip Cox gave the cause of death as sudden infant death syndrome.

The inquest heard Charlotte had been born normally after a full-term pregnancy and had been developing well, according to a medical report into her death.

Coroner Alan Crickmore noted that the house was a three-bedroom terrace and it was a little cramped with three adults and three children living there.

He said: "All the adults were smokers. I understand that when children live in a house with a smoky atmosphere there is a link between that and cot deaths."