

Safeguarding Newsletter



SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 2026 - WHAT'S CHANGED?

September 2026 brings a number of important changes across safeguarding and the early years sector. The updated Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework came into force on 1st September 2026, strengthening requirements in areas including safer sleep and screen use, alongside other safeguarding clarifications.

These changes sit alongside the updated *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*, changes to regulated activity and DBS requirements, and new statutory guidance around information sharing.

Although policies and procedures may change, the fundamental principles of safeguarding remain the same: **notice, question, record, report and act.**

Safeguarding is not simply the responsibility of the DSL or management team. Every member of staff has a responsibility to remain alert to changes in a child's behaviour, presentation or circumstances and to act promptly when something does not feel right.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

- Keep up to date with our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Remain professionally curious – don't accept things at face value if something doesn't feel right.
- Record concerns factually and promptly.
- Share concerns with the DSL without delay.
- Never assume that somebody else has reported something.
- Challenge unsafe practice, regardless of who is involved.
- Consider the whole child and family, rather than individual incidents in isolation.

WORKING TOGETHER 2026 – WHAT SHOULD WE KNOW?

Updated *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidance was published in March 2026. It strengthens the focus on early support and multi-agency working and gives greater attention to hidden harms including child sexual abuse, domestic abuse, online harms and abuse affecting infants. It also recognises that children may experience multiple harms at the same time...

... THINK SAFEGUARDING

Don't just ask 'What happened?' Ask 'Why might this be happening?' and 'What else do I know about this child or family?'

In this newsletter you can find:

Safeguarding Matters

Safer Recruitment

Safer Sleep

Screen Use

Information Sharing



SAFER RECRUITMENT

Safeguarding starts before someone joins our team. An important change to the definition of regulated activity with children came into force on 1st September 2026.

Previously, some people carrying out certain activities with children could fall outside regulated activity where they were appropriately supervised. The supervision exemption has now been removed.

This particularly affects volunteers who teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children frequently enough to meet the regulated-activity criteria.

Where a volunteer is undertaking regulated activity, they will now require an Enhanced DBS check including Children's Barred List information, even where they are supervised by another member of staff.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Safer recruitment is one of our first lines of defence in protecting children.

A person's experience, qualifications or familiarity to the setting must never replace the appropriate safeguarding checks.

At St Vincent's, recruitment and volunteering arrangements must therefore ensure that:

- the appropriate DBS checks are completed;
- Children's Barred List information is obtained where the role is eligible;
- volunteer roles are considered individually according to the activities undertaken and their frequency;
- safeguarding and recruitment records clearly evidence the checks undertaken;
- changes to a person's role trigger consideration of whether their DBS eligibility has also changed.

The DfE specifically advises organisations to reconsider DBS eligibility where a person's role or the way they carry it out changes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Supervised does not automatically mean outside regulated activity.

From September 2026, someone who teaches, trains, instructs, cares for or supervises children frequently enough may be undertaking regulated activity even if another member of staff is supervising them.

REMEMBER...

Safer recruitment doesn't end when somebody starts work.

It continues through:

Induction → Supervision → Training → Professional boundaries → Staff conduct → Whistleblowing → A culture where concerns are challenged

SAFER SLEEP

SAFE SLEEP IS SAFEGUARDING

The September 2026 EYFS strengthens the requirements around safer sleep, making this an important area for all practitioners working with babies and young children.

Safe sleep isn't simply part of a child's routine. It is a safeguarding responsibility.

OUR SAFE SLEEP PRINCIPLES

When supporting children to sleep:

- Follow each child's individual sleep information and our Safe Sleep Policy.
- Babies should be placed down to sleep safely and appropriately.
- Ensure sleep spaces remain clear and safe.
- Check sleeping children regularly in line with our procedure.
- Consider room temperature, clothing and bedding.
- Remain alert to changes in a child's breathing, colour, temperature or general presentation.
- Record sleep accurately.
- Share any concerns or changes with parents/carers and the appropriate member of the team.

PARENTAL PREFERENCE AND SAFE PRACTICE

Understanding a child's home routine helps us provide continuity and reassurance. However, parental preference cannot override safe practice.

If a parent asks us to follow a sleep practice that is inconsistent with our safe sleep procedures, speak to the Room Leader or Manager rather than simply following the request.

SAFER SLEEP: STOP AND THINK

Before settling a child, ask yourself:

- *Is the sleep space safe?*
- *Is the child positioned safely?*
- *Is the environment appropriate?*
- *When was the child last checked?*
- *Have I recorded the check?*
- *Is there anything different about this child today?*

NEVER ASSUME. ALWAYS CHECK.

A sleeping child still requires active safeguarding.

REMEMBER...

Safe sleep is about more than completing a sleep check.

Knowing the child is equally important. If something appears different – their breathing, colour, temperature, responsiveness or usual sleep pattern – respond immediately and seek support.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

DFE – HELP FOR EARLY YEARS PROVIDERS: SAFER SLEEP
<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/safer-sleep>

THE LULLABY TRUST – Safer Sleep for Babies
<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/baby-safety/safer-sleep-information/safer-sleep-overview/>

NHS / BEST START IN LIFE – Safe Sleep Advice for Babies
<https://www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/baby/>



SCREEN USE

Purposeful • Limited • Safe

The updated EYFS requires early years providers to have regard to screen use. This reflects increasing awareness of how digital technology can affect very young children's experiences and development.

Technology can have a place within early years practice, but it should enhance children's experiences rather than replace them.

At St Vincent's, our priority remains real-life experiences, meaningful interactions, communication, movement, exploration and play.

BEFORE USING A SCREEN, ASK...

WHY?

Why am I using this screen?

WHAT?

What will the child gain from it?

COULD?

Could I provide this experience in a more meaningful, hands-on way?

HOW LONG?

Is screen use being kept brief and purposeful?

AM I PRESENT?

Am I still interacting and communicating with the children?

SCREEN USE SHOULD NEVER REPLACE:

- conversation and responsive interaction
- physical activity
- outdoor experiences
- books and storytelling
- creative and sensory experiences
- imaginative play
- real-world exploration
- relationships with trusted adults

DON'T FORGET THE ADULTS!

Our Spring Safeguarding Newsletter looked at the risks associated with staff mobile phones and electronic devices, including distraction, inappropriate photography, confidentiality and reduced professional boundaries.

Those expectations remain just as important.

Being physically present isn't enough; we must be emotionally and professionally present too.

PAUSE BEFORE YOU PRESS PLAY...

If there isn't a clear benefit for the child, reconsider whether a screen is needed at all.



INFORMATION SHARING

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – and information can protect a child.

New statutory Information **Sharing to Safeguard Children and Young People** guidance was published on 10th September 2026.

The new information-sharing duty comes into force on 30th September 2026 and the statutory guidance expressly applies to the early years sector.

Effective safeguarding relies on practitioners and agencies sharing relevant information.

One piece of information may appear insignificant on its own. But when information from different people is brought together, it can reveal a much bigger picture.

IF IN DOUBT – SHARE CONCERNS WITH THE DSL.

You don't need to investigate.

You don't need to prove that something has happened.

You need to notice, record and report.

WHEN YOU HAVE A CONCERN...

NOTICE

What have you seen, heard or been told?

RECORD

Record the facts accurately and promptly.

REPORT

Share the concern with the DSL in accordance with our safeguarding procedures.

CONSIDER

Does this information connect with anything else we know?

ACT

Never assume somebody else will deal with it.

'BUT WHAT ABOUT GDPR?'

Data protection should not become a barrier to appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

If you are unsure whether information should be shared, seek advice from the DSL rather than simply deciding not to share it.

The new statutory guidance is designed to support more consistent information-sharing practice across organisations working with children and families.

PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY

Professional curiosity means looking beyond the obvious.

Ask yourself:

- *Is this behaviour unusual for this child?*
- *Has something changed?*
- *Is there a pattern developing?*
- *Are explanations consistent?*
- *What is the child communicating through their behaviour?*
- *What do we already know about the child and family?*
- *Could another professional hold information that changes the picture?*

Working Together 2026 gives greater attention to hidden harms and recognises that children can experience several forms of harm simultaneously.

THINK: THE JIGSAW EFFECT

Imagine every practitioner holds one piece of a jigsaw.

Your observation might seem small. A parent's comment might seem unimportant. An unexplained absence might appear unrelated. Another professional may hold a different piece.

Until those pieces are shared, nobody can see the whole picture.