



Safeguarding and Information Sharing Policy

Policy Statement

At Clare House Nursery, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is our highest priority.

We recognise that effective information sharing is essential to identifying concerns early, protecting children from harm and ensuring that children and families receive the right support at the right time.

We are committed to creating a culture where information is shared appropriately, securely, lawfully and without unnecessary delay.

We recognise that no single professional or organisation will always have a complete picture of a child's life. Working together with families, health professionals, children's social care, education providers and other relevant agencies helps us build a fuller understanding of children's needs and circumstances.

We respect children's and families' rights to privacy and confidentiality. However, we recognise that the safety and welfare of a child must never be compromised by a mistaken belief that information cannot be shared.

All staff have a responsibility to recognise, record and report safeguarding concerns and understand when information must be shared to protect a child.

Purpose of This Policy

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that safeguarding information is shared promptly, accurately and appropriately.
- Provide clear guidance to staff about when and how information can be shared.
- Explain the difference between consent and other lawful grounds for sharing information.
- Support effective partnership working with parents, carers and professionals.
- Ensure that concerns are recorded and securely maintained.

- Protect the confidentiality and privacy of children and families.
- Prevent unnecessary delays in safeguarding decisions.
- Establish clear responsibilities and accountability for information-sharing decisions.

This policy applies to all employees, apprentices, volunteers, students, managers and committee members who may handle confidential information.

Statutory Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, effective 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services, updated September 2026.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004, including the information-sharing provisions introduced under section 16LA.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Relevant Somerset safeguarding partnership procedures and local information-sharing arrangements.

This policy should be read alongside Clare House Nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy, Record of Concern procedures, Allegations Against Staff Policy, SEND Policy and relevant operational procedures.

Our Principles of Information Sharing

Clare House Nursery follows these principles:

Child-centred: The child's safety, wellbeing, rights and individual circumstances are central to all decisions.

Necessary: Information is shared where there is a clear and appropriate reason for doing so.

Proportionate: Only information relevant to the purpose is shared, unless a wider disclosure is necessary to safeguard the child.

Accurate: Information must be factual, relevant and as up to date as possible.

Timely: Safeguarding information must be shared without unnecessary delay.

Secure: Information must be shared through appropriate, secure channels and with the correct individuals or organisations.

Accountable: Decisions to share or not share information must be recorded, including the reasons for those decisions.

Respectful: Children and families are treated with dignity, sensitivity and without discrimination.

We recognise that a series of small concerns, when brought together, may indicate a significant safeguarding risk.

Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is responsible for:

- Providing guidance and support to staff regarding safeguarding information sharing.
- Receiving, reviewing and managing safeguarding concerns.
- Deciding when referrals or information sharing with external agencies are necessary.
- Liaising with Somerset Children's Social Care, health professionals, police and other safeguarding partners.
- Ensuring records are accurate, secure and appropriately maintained.
- Recording decisions and the reasons behind them.
- Supporting multi-agency assessments, meetings and safeguarding plans.
- Ensuring relevant safeguarding information is transferred securely when a child moves to another setting or school.
- Supporting staff to understand confidentiality, consent and lawful information sharing.
- Reviewing information-sharing practice through supervision, training and safeguarding audits.

All Staff

Every member of staff has a responsibility to:

- Remain alert to safeguarding concerns.
- Record concerns promptly and factually.
- Report concerns to the DSL without delay.
- Share relevant information with the DSL, even where concerns appear minor.
- Maintain confidentiality and use approved communication systems.
- Never promise a child or parent absolute confidentiality.
- Understand that safeguarding concerns must not be ignored because of uncertainty about data protection.
- Escalate concerns where appropriate action has not been taken.

Staff must not investigate safeguarding allegations themselves.

If the DSL is unavailable, staff must follow the nursery's safeguarding escalation procedures. Urgent action must not be delayed while waiting for the DSL.

When Information Should Be Shared

Information may need to be shared when:

- There are concerns about abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- A child may be experiencing domestic abuse or other harm within the family.
- A child's behaviour, presentation or development raises safeguarding concerns.
- There are unexplained injuries, concerning patterns of accidents or repeated incidents.
- There are concerns about a child's attendance, unexplained absence or wellbeing.
- When a pattern of behaviours or repeated concerns suggests a potential risk to a child's welfare or wellbeing.
- A family may benefit from early or targeted support.
- A child is subject to a child protection plan or receiving support from children's social care.
- Information is requested as part of a lawful safeguarding assessment or enquiry.
- A child is transferring to another nursery, childcare provider or school.

- There are concerns about the conduct or suitability of an adult working with children.
- Information about an adult connected to the child may be relevant to the child's safety.

Staff should recognise that information may be important even when it does not, by itself, meet the threshold for a child protection referral.

Consent and Sharing Information Without Consent

At Clare House Nursery, we value open and honest relationships with parents and carers.

Where appropriate, we will explain what information is being shared, why it is needed and who will receive it.

For routine support, assessments and referrals, we will involve parents and carers and obtain consent where this is appropriate or required by the relevant process.

However, **consent is not always required for safeguarding information to be shared lawfully.**

Information may be shared without parental consent where there is an appropriate lawful basis, including where:

- A child is at risk of harm.
- Seeking consent may increase the risk to a child or another person.
- Seeking consent could prejudice a safeguarding investigation.
- There is a legal obligation to disclose information.
- Information is necessary for an appropriate safeguarding purpose and the applicable data protection requirements are met.

Staff must not assume that a refusal of consent automatically prevents safeguarding information from being shared.

The DSL will consider the purpose, necessity, proportionality, relevant legal basis and potential consequences of sharing or withholding information.

Where there is uncertainty, the DSL will seek advice from the appropriate safeguarding professional or data protection adviser without unnecessarily delaying protective action.

Sharing Information with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are important partners in safeguarding children.

Where it is safe and appropriate, we will:

- Explain concerns openly and sensitively.
- Listen to parents' views and explanations.
- Share information about children's wellbeing and development.
- Involve families in planning support.
- Explain referrals and professional involvement.
- Keep families informed about relevant decisions and next steps.

However, there may be circumstances where discussing concerns with parents before sharing information could place a child at risk or interfere with an investigation.

In these situations, the DSL will seek appropriate safeguarding advice and decide whether, when and how parents should be informed.

Information will only be shared with individuals who have an appropriate right or lawful reason to receive it. Parental responsibility, court orders and any restrictions on disclosure must be considered.

Sharing Information with Other Professionals

Clare House Nursery recognises the importance of multi-agency working.

We may share relevant information with:

- Somerset Children's Social Care.
- Somerset safeguarding partnership professionals.
- Health visitors and other NHS professionals.
- Schools and other early years settings.
- Local Authority Inclusion and SEND teams.
- Family Help and Early Help professionals.
- Police and emergency services.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- Ofsted, where required.
- Other professionals with a legitimate safeguarding role.

Information shared must be relevant to the purpose, accurate and communicated securely.

The DSL will cooperate with safeguarding enquiries, assessments, strategy discussions and professional meetings as appropriate.

Requests for information will be checked to establish the identity and authority of the requester, the purpose of the request and the relevant legal basis.

Recording Safeguarding Concerns

All safeguarding concerns must be recorded promptly using the nursery's Record of Concern procedure.

Records should include:

- The child's full name and relevant identifying details.
- The date and time of the incident, observation or disclosure.
- A clear factual description of the concern.
- The child's own words wherever possible.
- Any relevant observations, injuries or changes in behaviour.
- Actions taken and individuals informed.
- The date and time information was shared.
- The name and role of the person receiving the information.
- Advice received and decisions made.
- The name and signature of the person completing the record.

Staff must distinguish between facts, observations, information reported by others and professional opinions.

Records must not contain unnecessary speculation or judgemental language.

Concerns must be passed to the DSL promptly. Where an immediate risk exists, staff must take urgent protective action in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Recording Information-Sharing Decisions

Whenever safeguarding information is shared externally, an appropriate record must be maintained.

This should identify:

- What information was shared.
- Why sharing was necessary.
- Who received the information.
- When and how it was shared.
- The lawful basis relied upon, where relevant.
- Whether the family was informed or consent was obtained, and where not, why not.
- Any advice received.
- Agreed actions and follow-up arrangements.

Where a decision is made not to share information despite an identified concern, the reasons must also be recorded and the decision reviewed if circumstances change.

Confidentiality and Secure Storage

Safeguarding records are highly confidential and must be handled with particular care.

At Clare House Nursery:

- Safeguarding records will be kept securely, with access restricted to authorised individuals.
- Paper records will be stored in locked, access-controlled storage.
- Electronic records will be protected through appropriate access controls and security measures.
- Information will only be accessed for legitimate professional purposes.
- Personal information must not be stored on unauthorised personal devices.
- Staff must not discuss confidential information in communal areas or with individuals who do not need to know.
- Safeguarding information must not be shared through personal messaging accounts or social media.
- Electronic information must be transferred through secure, approved methods.
- Any suspected loss, misdirection or unauthorised disclosure must be reported immediately to the manager and handled under the nursery's data breach procedure.

Safeguarding records should be managed separately from routine developmental records where appropriate, with access restricted according to the sensitivity of the information.

Records will be retained in accordance with the nursery's retention schedule and applicable legal requirements.

Information Sharing During Transitions

When a child moves to another nursery, early years setting or school, we recognise the importance of sharing relevant information to support continuity of care, learning, inclusion and safeguarding.

The DSL will consider what safeguarding information the receiving setting needs to know to protect and support the child.

Where necessary, relevant safeguarding records will be transferred securely to the receiving setting's DSL or appropriate safeguarding lead.

The transfer should be completed promptly and recorded, including confirmation of receipt where possible.

For children with SEND, medical needs or additional vulnerabilities, relevant support plans and professional information may also need to be shared in accordance with applicable legal requirements and appropriate arrangements with families.

Safeguarding information must not be withheld simply because a child is leaving the nursery.

Working with Children with SEND and Additional Needs

We recognise that children with SEND, communication differences or additional vulnerabilities may face barriers to expressing concerns or accessing support.

Staff must ensure that safeguarding information sharing is inclusive and responsive to each child's individual needs.

We will:

- Consider how children communicate their feelings, needs and experiences.
- Recognise that changes in behaviour may communicate distress.

- Avoid making assumptions that injuries, behaviour or distress are solely related to a child's disability or developmental needs.
- Work with families and relevant professionals to understand the child's circumstances.
- Share necessary information to support safety, access and participation.
- Make reasonable adjustments to communication and safeguarding procedures.

Where a child requires coordinated professional support, the DSL and SENDCo will work together while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Allegations and Concerns About Adults

Information sharing is equally important when concerns relate to an adult working with or having contact with children.

Concerns or allegations about staff, volunteers, students, committee members or other adults must be managed under the nursery's safeguarding and allegations procedures.

Where the relevant threshold is met, the nursery will consult or refer to the LADO and notify Ofsted as required.

Information must only be shared with those who have an appropriate role in managing the concern.

Staff must not discuss allegations informally, undertake their own investigations or disclose information in ways that could prejudice safeguarding enquiries.

The nursery will also maintain appropriate confidentiality and fairness towards adults who are the subject of concerns.

Information Sharing in an Emergency

Where a child is in immediate danger or requires urgent protection, staff must act without delay.

This may include contacting emergency services or children's social care directly.

Staff must not wait for parental consent or DSL approval where doing so would delay necessary emergency action.

The DSL must be informed as soon as safely possible, and a clear record of the incident, information shared and actions taken must be completed.

Professional Disagreements and Escalation

There may be occasions when professionals disagree about whether information should be shared or whether a safeguarding response is appropriate.

Where concerns remain, the DSL will seek further advice, challenge decisions professionally and use relevant Somerset escalation procedures.

Staff must also escalate concerns where they believe a child's safety has not been adequately addressed.

A decision by another professional not to act does not remove the nursery's responsibility to consider whether further safeguarding action is necessary.

Staff Training and Awareness

All staff will receive safeguarding training and induction appropriate to their role.

Training will include:

- Recognising safeguarding concerns.
- Recording and reporting concerns.
- Understanding confidentiality.
- Recognising when information needs to be shared.
- Understanding consent and lawful information sharing.
- Using secure communication and recordkeeping systems.
- Responding to requests from other professionals.
- Understanding escalation and whistleblowing procedures.

Safeguarding information sharing will also be discussed through staff supervision, room meetings and ongoing professional development.

The DSL will ensure that relevant changes in statutory guidance are communicated to staff.

Monitoring and Review

The manager and management committee will ensure that this policy is reviewed at least annually, or sooner where:

- Legislation or statutory guidance changes.
- Local safeguarding procedures are updated.
- A safeguarding incident identifies areas for improvement.
- An audit highlights gaps in recording or information sharing.
- Changes to nursery systems or working practices require updates.

The DSL will monitor the effectiveness of information-sharing procedures and promote a culture of professional curiosity, accountability and timely safeguarding action.

Our Commitment

At Clare House Nursery, we believe that protecting children requires professionals to communicate, listen, question, record and work together.

We will always seek to respect the privacy and dignity of children and families while recognising our responsibility to share information when necessary to safeguard a child.

Our guiding principle is that information must be handled with care, but never withheld through misunderstanding or unnecessary hesitation when a child needs protection.

