



Confidentiality policy

Statement of intent

It is our intention to respect the privacy of children and their parents/carers, while ensuring that they access high quality early years care and education in our setting.

Aim

We aim to ensure that all parents/carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children.

We meet the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998 with regard to protecting the individual's rights to a private and family life, home and correspondence. Our only justification to challenge these right is where we believe that a child may be at risk of significant harm, to prevent a crime or disorder.

We meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 with regard to the information we gather from or about families how we gather it, store it and use it. Our procedures enable us to meet these requirements.

We have regard to the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality and only share information with other professionals or agencies on a 'need to know' basis, with consent from parent/carers or without their consent in specified circumstances to do with safeguarding children.

Method

We keep two kinds of records on children attending our setting:

Developmental records

- These include observations of children in the setting, samples of their work, summary developmental reports and records of achievement.
- They are usually kept in the setting and can be accessed, and contributed to, by staff, the child and the child's parent/carer.
- Parent/carers will have free access to developmental records for their child and will be able to input into these documents.

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Personal records

- These include registration and admission forms, signed consents, and correspondence concerning the child or family, reports or minutes from meetings concerning the child from other agencies, an ongoing record of relevant contact with parent/carers and observations by staff on any confidential matter involving the child, such as developmental concerns or child protection matters.
- These confidential records are stored in a lockable file or cabinet and are kept secure by the person in charge in an office or other suitably safe place.
- Parent/carers have access to all written information about their child (except where data protection laws stipulate it is against the best interests of the child to do so). A written request must be made for personal files on the child. Parent/carers do not have access to information about any other child.
- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parent/carers with other members of staff, except where it affects planning for the child's needs. Staff induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality in the role of the key person.

Information Sharing

- There are times when we are required to share information about a child or their family. These are when:
 - there are concerns a child is or may be suffering significant harm
 - the 'reasonable cause to believe' a child is or may be suffering significant harm is not clear
 - there are concerns about 'serious harm to adults' (such as domestic violence or other matters affecting the welfare of parent/carer)
- We explain to families about our duty to share information for the above reasons.
- Where we have concerns as above, we would normally gain consent from families to share. This does not have to be in writing, but we record in the child's file that we have gained verbal consent as a result of discussing a concern that we need to refer to a social care agency.
- We do not seek consent from parent/carers to share information where we believe that a child, or sometimes a vulnerable adult, may be endangered by seeking to gain consent. For example where we have cause to believe a parent/carer may try to cover up abuse, or threaten a child.
- Where we take a decision to share information without consent that is recorded in the child's file and the reason clearly stated.
- Where evidence to support our concerns are not clear we may seek advice from North Somerset's Children's Social Care department.
- We only share relevant information that is accurate, factual, non-judgemental and up to date.

Other records

- Issues to do with the employment of staff, whether paid or unpaid, remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions.
- Students, when they are observing in the setting, are advised of our confidentiality policy and required to respect it.

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Access to personal records

Parent/carers may request access to any personal records held on their child and family following the procedure below.

- Any request to see the child's personal file by a parent or person with parental responsibility must be made in writing to the setting leader or manager.
- The setting commits to providing access within 14 days - although this may be extended.
- The setting's leader/manager prepare the file for viewing.
- All third parties are written to, stating that a request for disclosure has been received and asking for their permission to disclose to the person requesting it. A copy of these letters are retained on the file.
- 'Third parties' include all family members who may be referred to in the records.
- It also includes workers from any other agency, including social services, the health authority, etc. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual to go directly to them.
- When all the consents/refusals to disclose have been received these are attached to the copy of the request letter.
- A photocopy of the complete file is taken.
- The setting leader go through the file and remove any information which a third party has refused consent to disclose. This is best done with a thick black marker, to score through every reference to the third party and information they have added to the file.
- What remains is the information recorded by the setting, detailing the work initiated and followed by them in relation to confidential matters. This is called the 'clean copy'.
- The 'clean copy' is photocopied for the parent/carer who are then invited in to discuss the contents. The file should never be given straight over, but should be gone through by the setting leader, so that it can be explained.
- Legal advice may be sought before sharing a file, especially where the parent/carer has possible grounds for litigation against the setting or another (third party) agency.

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the setting, which is to the safety and well-being of the child.

Signed: _____

Policy Date: _____

Review Date: _____