



Safer Sleep Policy

(EYFS Safer Sleep Policy (Under 5s))

As of **April 20, 2026**, the Department for Education (DfE), in partnership with the Lullaby Trust, has released updated safer sleep guidance. While these requirements will become legally binding in the **September 2026** statutory framework update, the DfE and Ofsted expect providers to align their policies with these standards immediately.

The new guidance focuses on clear, enforceable rules to reduce the risk of **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)** and **Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood (SUDC)**.

To align with April 2026 guidance, your policy should clearly cover:

- Back sleeping position
- Individual sleep spaces
- Cot use for under 1s
- Clear sleep environment rules
- Temperature control (16–20°C)
- Supervision procedures (sight/hearing + checks)
- Staff training requirements
- Risk assessment & record keeping
- Parent communication

Aligned with Department for Education Safer Sleep Guidance – April 2026

Policy Statement

We are committed to providing a safe sleep environment for all babies and young children in our care. This policy follows current safer sleep guidance to minimise the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related incidents.

All staff will implement safe sleep practices consistently and ensure that children are protected while resting or sleeping.

1. Core Sleep Space Requirements

The "Clear Cot" policy is now more explicit. Every child under 5 (and especially those under 2) must have a safe, designated sleep space.

Feature	Requirement
Surface	Must be clear, flat, and firm . Use only a waterproof mattress in good condition.
Equipment	Babies under 12 months must sleep in a cot (includes travel cots or Moses baskets).
Prohibited Items	No pillows, duvets, bumpers, soft toys, wedges, pods, nests, or thick bedding.
Position	Always place children on their back to sleep.
"Feet-to-Foot"	If using blankets, the child's feet must touch the end of the cot so they cannot wriggle down.

2. Supervision and Monitoring

The 2026 guidance tightens how staff must observe sleeping children.

- **Under 6 Months:** An adult **must** be in the same room at all times.
- **Over 6 Months:** Frequent physical checks are required. If a baby monitor is used, it must provide both **sight and sound** at all times, and staff must still be able to reach the child immediately.
- **Active Checking:** Staff should observe the rise and fall of the chest and ensure the child's head remains uncovered.

Sleep checks will be recorded include:

- Breathing
- Body temperature
- Sleep position
- General wellbeing

3. Temperature Regulation

Overheating is a significant risk factor emphasized in the new guidance.

- **Target Temperature:** Maintain sleep rooms between **16°C and 20°C**. Use a reliable thermometer; "feeling" the room is no longer sufficient for compliance.
- **Checking the Child:** Check the child's temperature by feeling their **chest or the back of their neck**. (Hands and feet are naturally cooler and not a reliable gauge).
- **Clothing:** Remove outdoor clothing, hats, and extra layers as soon as a child comes indoors, even if they are asleep.

4. Age-specific considerations (under 5s)

Under 1 year

- Must sleep:
 - On back
 - In a cot
 - In a **completely clear sleep space**
- Highest risk group → strictest controls

1–2 years

- Still require:
 - Clear sleep space
 - Back sleeping encouraged
- May use comforters **only after 12 months**

2–5 years

- Sleep mats or beds acceptable
- Still must:
 - Be supervised
 - Have safe environment (no hazards, overheating, unsafe items)

5. Sleeping While Travelling

A new section in the 2026 guidance addresses outings and trips.

- **Transitioning:** If a baby under 12 months falls asleep in a car seat or buggy, they **must** be transferred to a cot as soon as you return to the setting.
- **Equipment:** A buggy or pram should not be used as a primary sleep space unless it is a "lie-flat" model, and even then, children should be moved to a cot when possible.
- **No Covers:** Never cover a pram or buggy with a blanket or cloth to create shade, as this dangerously increases the internal temperature.

6. Policy Checklist for Your Setting

To align with the April 2026 guidance, ensure your written policy includes:

1. **Staff Training:** All staff must read the new DfE/NHS SIDS guidance and be trained on "Back to Sleep" and "Clear Cot" protocols.
2. **Risk Assessments:** These should specifically cover sleep for children with **SEND** or complex medical needs, where exceptions to standard positioning may be required by a medical professional.
3. **Recording:** Maintain a log of sleep checks (e.g., every 10–15 minutes) and room temperature readings.
4. **Comforters:** Only allow comforters (like small blankets or toys) for children **over 12 months old**.

Note on Compliance: Ofsted inspectors will now use the specific language of this 2026 guidance to judge "Effectiveness of Leadership and Management." Failure to provide a flat, clear sleep space is likely to be viewed as a significant safeguarding breach.