

1 minute guide: Safer Sleep.

What does the EYFS says about sleeping children?

The EYFS 2025 requirement (3.85 CM & 3.69 GP) states:

Sleeping Arrangements

Sleeping children must be frequently checked to ensure that they are safe. Being safe includes ensuring that cots and bedding are in good condition and suited to the age of the child, and that babies are placed down to sleep safely in line with the latest government safety guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sudden-infant-death-syndrome-sids/> Practitioners/childminders

may also find it helpful to read NHS advice on safety of sleeping babies:

<https://www.nhs.uk/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/reduce-the-risk-of-sudden-infant-death-syndrome/>

Baby room (3.70 GP)

3.70 There should be a separate baby room for children under the age of two. However, providers must ensure that children in a baby room have contact with older children and are moved into the older age group when appropriate.

Points to consider

- Best practice would be to not leave sleeping children unattended. Children must always be in sight **or** hearing of a practitioner, but preferably in sight **and** hearing.
- If you use baby monitors to check on sleeping children (audio or visual), We would always advise a member of staff goes into the room to physically check at regular intervals and document when sleep checks are carried out to provide an audit trail. It is not possible to check on the temperature of the room or visibly check the condition of each child from a monitor.
- Minimum ratios still apply when children are sleeping. For example 1 member of staff should not be left with more children than EYFS ratios allow. Sleep times should not be used as a way of reducing staff numbers to cover breaks/lunches.
- Children should not sleep in bouncers or high chairs. Where children fall asleep in a bouncer, high chair or on a member of staff they should be transferred as soon as possible to a firm, flat surface.
- Children should not sleep in car seats or pushchairs for prolonged periods of time.
- Where it is necessary for children to sleep in pushchairs these should be age appropriate and lay flat. A child would be considered too big for a pushchair if their feet can touch the floor when seated in it, as they could easily tip the pushchair over. Therefore it would not be appropriate for them to sleep in it.
- If using a double pushchair, consider the age of the children and if there is enough space for them to sleep comfortably, and also if either child could tip the pushchair over.
- For settings and childminders providing overnight care, you should ensure that Ofsted have been given the appropriate notification and that additional risk assessments are in place.
- The EYFS states that children should be fully supervised at all times when eating, this includes when drinking milk from a bottle. Children should not be left to fall asleep alone with a bottle or cup.

- Studies have shown that the use of dummies can reduce the risk of SIDS, however any dummy clips, chains or bibs should be removed during sleep time.
- All settings should be smoke free (including e-cigarettes and vaping), where staff smoke on breaks they should have a change of clothes and wash their hands before going back to the children. Staff should wait for 30 minutes after smoking before holding babies or children, even with a change of clothes.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the safer sleep practice, which your setting promotes.

A good sleeping environment

- Cots and beds should be free of clutter, there should be no soft toys with the exception of a single comforter.
- Pillows should not be used for children under the age of 12 months.
- Cot bumpers should be removed.
- The ideal temperature for sleeping children is between 16-20 degrees. Children should not sleep in a room above 28 degrees.
- Consider the change of weather, how would you cool a room down in warmer weather and also how would you ensure a room is at the right temperature during colder months.
- Mobiles over cots should only be used where children are not able to pull themselves up to standing.
- Children should be provided with fresh clean bedding and meet the requirements for the particular surface.
- Ensure all sleeps mats are cleaned after every child.
- Coats, hats, and thick clothing should be removed for sleep, even if this disturbs an already sleeping child.
- Advise against covering pushchairs & prams with a blanket or anything which may stop air circulation.
- Are all sleeping equipment regularly checked to ensure they are fit for use, how is this monitored?

Partnership with Parents

Providers must meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements at all times. To ensure they are meeting these requirements they must have effective systems in place to ensure that the individual needs of the child are being met. This includes giving due consideration to the wishes of the child's parents. However, in the event of a conflict between the parents' wishes and the welfare requirement, the provider must put the safeguarding and best interest of the child as the priority.

We would encourage settings to recognise parents' knowledge of their child with regard to sleep routines and where possible, work together with them to ensure each child's individual sleep routines and well-being continues to be met. However, staff should not force a child to sleep or keep them awake against his or her will. They should also consider if waking a child after a set amount of time is meeting the needs of the child.

Receiving sleeping children

It is your decision whether you are happy to accept children who are asleep on arrival. Here are a few things for you to consider.

- It is difficult to tell if a child is well enough to attend if they are asleep on arrival
- Children who are asleep in car seats or pushchairs may have their breathing impacted by the position they are in.

- It may not be possible to identify any existing injuries when children have coats or blankets on. Parents/carers may then allege that the injury happened in setting.
- There is a possible risk of overheating if children are left to sleep in coats and all in one suits.
- If children arrive asleep consider how you might record this.

For further information visit the Lullaby Trust <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/>

[Safer-sleep-awareness-for-early-years-settings-booklet.pdf](#)