

Strengthening Safeguarding: Key Updates to the EYFS Framework Effective 1st September 2026

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Ensuring children's safety and well-being is the top priority in Early Years settings. To strengthen these protections, the Department for Education (DfE) published updated [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) Statutory Frameworks](#) for both childminders and group/school-based providers on **13th July**. Effective **1st September 2026**, these revised guidelines feature stronger safeguarding requirements, clearer rules around technology and key practice updates.

Core EYFS Framework Updates

Both the childminder and group/school-based versions of the EYFS include mandatory updates designed to elevate safeguarding practices:

- **Explicit Safer Sleep Requirements Integrated:** Safer sleep rules are now written directly into the main statutory framework. Providers no longer need to reference external documents to check requirements. This includes specific requirements like maintaining baby sleep rooms between **16-20°C**, placing babies 12 months and under strictly in cots (no floor beds or pods) and conducting frequent physical checks. Ofsted is also updating its inspection toolkits to check settings directly on safer sleep and weaning arrangements.
- **Tighter Criminal Record & Vetting Checks:** Enhanced criminal record checks are now strictly mandatory for all volunteers (including those who are supervised). Furthermore, new employees are strictly prohibited from commencing employment until their enhanced check has been fully received-requiring managers to build sufficient recruitment buffer times into recruitment timelines.
- **Revised Staff Disclosure Rules:** Clearer requirements have been set regarding what information providers must instruct staff to disclose if it impacts their suitability to work with children.
- **Banned Dog Breeds Prohibited:** Registered childcare cannot be provided from any premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present. Banned dog breeds must not be present on any premises at any time.

- **Lower Threshold for Safeguarding Allegations:** Providers must now inform Ofsted or their Childminder Agency (CMA) of any allegations of 'harm' (lowered from the previous threshold of 'serious harm') regarding anyone living, working or caring for children on the premises.
- **Childcare on Domestic Premises Alignment:** Group and school-based providers operating on domestic premises must now notify Ofsted or their CMA of any changes to individuals aged 16 or over living or working on the site, aligning this sector with existing childminder standards.

Guidance on Screen Time in Early Years Settings

Under both updated frameworks, providers are required to have regard to new [screen use guidance](#) published in **July 2026**. Building on parent-focused advice released in March 2026, this guidance was created alongside industry experts - including the *Digital Standards Early Years Action Group* and the *Early Years Screen Time Advisory Group*.

Importantly, the guidance does not suggest a total ban on technology. Instead, it establishes that screen use must be intentional and must never routinely replace active outdoor play, face-to-face conversations, sensory exploration or shared reading.

Other Updates

Focus Area	Key Update
General Framework Clarifications	Minor wording edits have been applied across both framework documents to clarify existing rules and make operational compliance straightforward.
Qualifications & Standards	The Early Years Qualifications Requirements and Standards document has been updated to provide clear, definitive guidance on Level 2 English requirements.

Preparing for 1st September 2026

With these updates coming into force shortly, early years leaders, childminders and managers should review their current safer recruitment processes, update safeguarding and disclosure policies and ensure all staff are briefed on the revised guidelines.

 *Reflection Time: Which documents/policies do you need to update to ensure you are fully compliant with the updated Statutory Framework?*

References

- **Department for Education (DfE):** [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Group and School-Based Providers](#) (Published 13 July 2026, effective 1 September 2026).
- **Department for Education (DfE):** [Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: Childminders](#) (Published 13 July 2026, effective 1 September 2026).
- **DfE / Early Years Advisory Groups:** [Screen Use Guidance for Early Years Settings](#) (July 2026).
- **DfE:** [Early Years Qualifications Requirements and Standards](#) (Updated September 2026).