

Respecting Privacy in Support

Protecting dignity, ownership, and trust

Children and young people deserve support that helps them feel safe — not exposed. Needing support does not mean every personal detail should automatically be shared. Privacy, dignity and ownership over their own story still matter.

Privacy should never come at the expense of safety. If something suggests a child or someone else may be at risk, adults may need to involve the right people to keep them safe.

Children and young people deserve both privacy and safety.



1. Before sharing information

- ☐ Does this person actually need to know?
- ☐ Has the student agreed to this being shared?
- ☐ Is this the right time and setting?
- ☐ Does this protect the student's dignity?
- ☐ Am I sharing this to support the student — or to make things easier for adults?
- ☐ Is this about dignity — or safety?
- ☐ Have I explained why this may need to be shared?

Not everything needs to be explained publicly.



2. Before stepping into friendships

- ☐ Has the student asked for help?
- ☐ Am I supporting the student — or managing the relationship?
- ☐ Could stepping in create more pressure or embarrassment?
- ☐ Have I given the student space to handle this first?
- ☐ Is this about safety — or my own discomfort?

Helping too quickly can sometimes take away dignity.



3. When support becomes too personal

Watch for moments when:

- ☐ Adults speak for the student without checking first
- ☐ Personal information is shared in front of peers
- ☐ The student's needs are discussed as if they are not present
- ☐ Adults step into private social moments too quickly
- ☐ Support becomes over-explanation instead of protection

Support should protect dignity as much as it provides help.



PAUSE

Does this need my involvement right now?



ASK

What does the student want me to do?



PROTECT

Am I protecting both dignity and safety?

Good support protects both safety and dignity.

Protecting dignity, ownership, and trust



4. Communication matters

How we communicate about a child or young person can either protect their dignity or take it away.

- ☐ Do I speak about the student as if they are present?
- ☐ Do I use respectful language that maintains dignity?
- ☐ Do I avoid labelling or unnecessary detail?
- ☐ Am I sharing information in a private space?
- ☐ Have I considered how my words might be heard or repeated?
- ☐ Is my communication focused on support, not judgement?

The way we speak about someone shapes how they are seen.



Real life reminders

- **Pause before you share.**
Ask: Does this need to be shared right now?
- **Think about the impact.**
Will this protect the student's dignity?
Could it cause embarrassment or harm?
- **Include the student.**
Ask them what they want and respect their choice.
- **Keep information private.**
Share only with those who need to know and in private.
- **Use respectful language.**
Speak about the student as if they are present.
- **Support, don't take over.**
Give space for independence and trust.
- **Get guidance when unsure.**
If you're not sure, ask a trusted colleague or leader.



Good support protects both safety and dignity.



5. Student voice comes first

Children and young people have the right to be included in decisions about their own lives.

- ☐ Have I asked the student what they want?
- ☐ Have I explained the options to them clearly?
- ☐ Am I giving them time and space to respond?
- ☐ Am I respecting their choice, even if it's different to mine?
- ☐ Am I supporting their independence at their level?

When we listen first, we empower choice.



Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on your practice.
What could you do differently?



6. Boundaries protect everyone

Clear boundaries support safety, trust and appropriate relationships.

- ☐ Am I clear about my role and responsibilities?
- ☐ Do I avoid sharing too much about my own life?
- ☐ Am I mindful of physical and emotional boundaries?
- ☐ Do I know when to seek guidance from colleagues or leadership?
- ☐ Am I creating a safe and respectful environment for everyone?

Boundaries create safe and respectful support.

Explore more resources

Practical tools and reflections to support privacy, dignity and respectful support.



Notes



7. Team communication

Strong teams protect privacy through shared understanding.

- ☐ Do we discuss students respectfully?
- ☐ Do we only share what is necessary?
- ☐ Do we respect confidentiality in team conversations?
- ☐ Do we speak about students as if they are not present?
- ☐ Do we challenge conversations that cross privacy boundaries?
- ☐ Do we focus on what supports the student, not just what is convenient?

Team conversations shape the culture of dignity.



8. Working with families and carers

Families and carers are partners in support. Privacy should always be respected.

- ☐ Have we explained what information will be shared and why?
- ☐ Have we asked for consent where appropriate?
- ☐ Are we respecting the student's right to privacy?
- ☐ Do we assume information needs to be shared with everyone?
- ☐ Do we keep the focus on the student's best interests?

Respect builds trust with families and protects the student.



9. Balancing privacy and safety

It's not either/or. We can protect both.

- ☐ Have I considered both safety and dignity?
- ☐ Is there a genuine risk that needs action?
- ☐ Have I involved the right people?
- ☐ Have I explained to the student what will happen next?
- ☐ Have I documented this decision?

Good support balances safety with dignity and trust.



10. Everyday actions that protect dignity

- ☒ Knock or ask before entering personal spaces.
- ☒ Speak privately, not in front of peers.
- ☒ Use the student's preferred name.
- ☒ Ask before offering help.
- ☒ Explain why information may need to be shared.
- ☒ Give choices wherever possible.
- ☒ Focus on strengths and what the student can do.
- ☒ Treat the student as a person, not a diagnosis.
- ☒ Protect their story. Let them own it.
- ☒ Remember: dignity does not take a break.



Keep at the heart

Students are more than their needs. Our role is to support them, not to become their story. Privacy, dignity and ownership help them feel safe, included and respected.



Action plan

What is one small action you can take this week to better protect privacy, dignity and ownership?

Who could support you with this?

When will you do this?

More resources to explore

Practical tools and reflections to support privacy, dignity and respectful support.

Before You Share

A Digital Dignity Reflection

Support and Independence

Finding the Right Balance

Friendship or Support?

Understanding the Difference

Notes

11. Digital dignity

Privacy matters online too.

- ☐ Do we have consent before taking or sharing photos or videos?
- ☐ Are we careful about what is posted or stored?
- ☐ Are names and identifying details protected?
- ☐ Do we teach and model respectful online behaviour?
- ☐ Do we consider how digital information could be used now or in the future?

Protecting digital dignity protects real-world dignity.

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Protecting digital dignity protects
real-world dignity.

Our words shape how students are seen and treated.

- ☐ Do we use respectful, person-first language?
- ☐ Do we avoid labels and assumptions?
- ☐ Do we speak about the student,
not about their disability?
- ☐ Do we focus on strengths, not limitations?
- ☐ Do we challenge unkind or disrespectful language?

**Respectful language builds respect
for the whole person.**

Good support grows and improves.

- ☐ Do we regularly reflect on our practices?
- ☐ Do we welcome feedback from students?
- ☐ Do we learn from mistakes and make changes?
- ☐ Do we stay updated on inclusive practice?
- ☐ Do we keep asking: "How can I better support dignity and choice?"

Reflection helps us grow
and support better every day.

Before I share, step in or speak, I will...

- ✓ Pause and think.
- ✓ Consider the student's voice.
- ✓ Protect dignity and ownership.
- ✓ Share only what is necessary.
- ✓ Include the student.
- ✓ Respect boundaries.
- ✓ Balance privacy with safety.
- ✓ Reflect and learn.
- ✓ Act with care and respect.
- ✓ Remember: dignity does not take a break.

Every respectful choice helps students feel safe, included and empowered.

Take a moment to reflect on your practice.
What is one area you want to strengthen?

What will you do differently?

Who can support you?

Practical tools and reflections to support privacy, dignity and respectful support.

The diagram consists of three vertical rectangular boxes arranged horizontally, each with a distinct background color and a central icon. The first box on the left is purple and contains the text 'Before You Share' in bold, followed by 'A Digital Awareness Reflection' and an icon of a shield with a padlock. The middle box is orange and contains the text 'Support and Independence' in bold, followed by 'Finding the Right Balance' and an icon of a person climbing stairs. The third box on the right is purple and contains the text 'Friendship or Support?' in bold, followed by 'Understanding the Difference' and an icon of two people standing with a heart above them.

Before You Share	Support and Independence	Friendship or Support?
A Digital Awareness Reflection	Finding the Right Balance	Understanding the Difference
