



Seeing the point of CCTV?

Jackie Hyde reviews recent court cases involving CCTV and looks at some of the pros and cons of installing it in your nursery



CCTV systems have almost exclusively been used to protect a business from external risks like thefts or malicious damage. However, it is worth considering that CCTV can also protect a nursery and its staff should they be accused of negligence following an injury to a child - or worse a safeguarding allegation.

We are still surprised at how few nurseries we meet have actually installed CCTV inside. Indeed, many nursery managers and owners are still actively opposed to it because of the perceived intrusion. But recently, a high-profile nursery case created a lively debate about the benefits of installing surveillance in the nursery.

Feel the benefits

Partly as a result of that, we feel CCTV offers the following:

- peace of mind for parents as it helps to reassure them that their child is safe and the setting is constantly monitored
- an extra level of protection for both children and staff. For example, a child's injury will automatically be captured on CCTV, allowing the parents to see exactly what happened and how. This also protects the nursery as they have evidence of how, where and when the injury took place – and could prevent a claim from the parents
- security for nursery staff, as footage can eliminate misunderstandings and potentially false accusations by providing vital evidence that protects both nursery and staff.

That aside, it will help the police and the Crime Prosecution Service to secure a successful prosecution. This was recently the case at a West Midlands nursery, where a member of staff was captured on CCTV physically abusing children. The CCTV footage was crucial in securing a prosecution.

Protecting your interests

Conversely, one of our clients last year was caught up in a case where a child sustained a non-accidental injury. Unfortunately, as the time of the incident couldn't be determined, three nursery nurses were implicated. And, while a CCTV system had been installed and was regularly reviewed, the CCTV footage had been routinely deleted before there was any suspicion of police involvement. Although all the practitioners were exonerated, it is likely that, if the CCTV footage had been available, they would have been eliminated much earlier in the enquiry.

There are concerns about how long CCTV footage should be kept because of data protection considerations, but, if there are any recordings of injuries or anything else of concern, we recommend keeping copies of the footage for longer periods.

Forget Big Brother

Nursery management teams are often concerned that staff may be uncomfortable with being regularly recorded on CCTV as this could create a 'Big Brother' culture. But the

nurseries that already have these systems in place say the staff soon forget the cameras exist.

Indeed, if you explain the benefits of CCTV clearly to your staff, they will appreciate that the cameras can protect them should an allegation arise. Some nurseries also believe that CCTV helps identify training needs, which, in turn, can help staff improve their childcare skills.

The parent's viewpoint

Continuing the theme, where webcams are installed in the nursery, parents can remotely view the nursery room where their child is being cared for. This is clearly a personal choice for a nursery setting, as some parents find this reassuring, while others feel uncomfortable about their children being viewed by other parents.

Whatever your decision on this highly topical issue, there is no doubt there are clear benefits that we all need to think very hard about. ■

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