

ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD

DoWMAT Guidance document for DSLs

September 2026

Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure an appropriate **senior member of staff**, from the school **leadership team**, is appointed to the role of designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead should take **lead responsibility** for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety, Prevent). This should be explicit in the role holder's job description.

The designated safeguarding lead should have the appropriate status and authority within the school or college to carry out the duties of the post. The role of the designated safeguarding lead carries a significant level of responsibility, and they should be given the additional time, funding, training, resources and support they need to carry out the role effectively. Their additional responsibilities include providing advice and support to other staff on child welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters, taking part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or supporting other staff to do so, and contributing to the assessment of children. The DSL should have a signed job description in place.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) provides strategic leadership and operational oversight of safeguarding across the academy. This includes identifying patterns, trends, emerging risks and reporting regularly to senior leaders and the Local Academy Board on safeguarding themes, attendance concerns, exclusions and vulnerable groups. The DSL ensures safeguarding is embedded throughout the curriculum, pastoral systems and wider school culture.

The DSL is responsible for ensuring timely referrals and active participation in all multi-agency processes, including Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection and contextual safeguarding. Where concerns are not addressed by partner agencies, the DSL leads on professional challenge and escalation. The DSL ensures all staff understand local thresholds for intervention as set out by WSCP/DSPP.

The DSL maintains oversight of all safeguarding records, ensuring accuracy, chronology and timely updates. Together with the Deputy DSLs, the DSL regularly audits safeguarding files and the digital safeguarding system, recording findings and actions. The DSL and DDSs meet regularly to analyse safeguarding data, identifying vulnerable cohorts, repeated concerns and systemic issues.

The DSL leads on online safety, overseeing filtering and monitoring systems, digital safeguarding risks, and online harm trends. The DSL ensures staff are trained to recognise online-enabled exploitation, AI-generated sexual imagery, digital grooming, and works with IT staff to complete the annual filtering and monitoring review required by KCSIE 2025.

The DSL works closely with the attendance lead to identify patterns of absence linked to safeguarding concerns, ensuring rapid response to unexplained absence and appropriate escalation for children missing education.

The DSL ensures Early Help is offered at the earliest opportunity, coordinates multi-agency Early Help plans and ensures staff understand their role in identifying emerging needs and contributing to Early Help assessments.

The DSL provides safeguarding advice, guidance and informal supervision to staff raising concerns and ensures Deputy DSLs receive appropriate support, training and oversight. The DSL leads on the development and delivery of safeguarding training for all staff, ensuring it reflects local risks, national updates, learning from serious case reviews and ensures training records are accurate and up to date.

The DSL ensures staff understand how to report allegations and low-level concerns, maintaining oversight of patterns or repeated issues and liaises with the Headteacher, LADO and Trust Safeguarding Lead where appropriate.

The DSL leads on contextual safeguarding, assessing risks within peer groups, the community, and online spaces. The DSL ensures the school responds robustly to sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour and violence against women and girls (VAWG) and ensures pupil voice is captured in safeguarding practice.

The DSL ensures safeguarding is considered in all relevant risk assessments, including trips, clubs, visitors, and contractors and oversees the child-on-child abuse policy and associated risk assessments.

- September 2024 a Senior Attendance Champion should be in place and be working closely with the DSL. The champion should be named in the attendance policy. Attendance strategies should be discussed regularly and recorded for all families. The SENDCo and Senior Mental Health lead should be communicating with the DSL and Attendance Champion regularly.
- September 2025 DSLs should ensure that all rationale is recorded for decision making.
- September 2026 DSLs should ensure that pupil voice and supervision is regularly recorded throughout cases on the safeguarding system.

DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEADS

It is a matter for individual schools and colleges as to whether they choose to have one or more deputy designated safeguarding leads. Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead and the role should be explicit in their job description. Whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the designated safeguarding lead, this lead responsibility should not be delegated. Deputy safeguarding leads should challenge decision making of the designated safeguarding lead and escalate concerns and make a referral if they deem it necessary.

AVAILABILITY

During term time the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Whilst generally speaking the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges, working with the designated safeguarding lead, to define what “available” means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and or Skype or other such media is acceptable. It is a matter for individual schools and colleges and the designated safeguarding lead to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

MANAGE REFERRALS

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to refer cases:

- Of suspected abuse and neglect to the local authority children’s social care as required and support staff who make referrals to local authority children’s social care.
- To the Channel programme where there is a radicalisation concern as required and support staff who make referrals to the Channel programme.
- Where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child to the Disclosure and Barring Service as required, and where a crime may have been committed to the Police as required. [NPCC - When to call the police](#) should help understand when to consider calling the police and what to expect when working with the police.
- Where children are missing in education this should be followed up immediately with the Local Authority.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

The designated safeguarding lead is expected to:

- Act as a source of support, advice and expertise for all staff.
- Act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners.
- Liaise with the headteacher or head of school to inform him or her of issues- especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations. This should include being aware of the requirement for children to have an Appropriate Adult. Further information can be found in the Statutory guidance - [PACE Code C 2019](#).
- As required, liaise with the “case manager” (as per Part four) and the local authority designated officer(s) (LADO) for child protection concerns in cases which concern a staff member.
- Liaise with staff (especially teachers, pastoral support staff, school nurses, IT technicians, senior mental health leads and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO’s), or the named person with oversight for SEND and senior mental health leads) on matters of safety and safeguarding and welfare (including online and digital safety) and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies so that children’s needs are considered holistically.

- Liaise with the senior mental health lead and, where available, the mental health support team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health.
- Promote supportive engagement with parents and/or carers in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including where families may be facing challenging circumstances.
- Work with the headteacher and relevant strategic leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting educational outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children in need are experiencing, or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on children's attendance, engagement and achievement at school. This includes:
 - Ensuring that the school knows who its cohort of children who have or have had a social worker are, understanding their academic progress and attainment, and maintaining a culture of high aspirations for this cohort, and
 - Supporting teaching staff to provide additional academic support or reasonable adjustments to help children who have or have had a social worker reach their potential, recognising that even when statutory social care intervention has ended, there is still a lasting impact on children's educational outcomes.

We recognise that in some settings there may be a different strategic lead for promoting the educational outcomes of children who have or have had a social worker, particularly in larger schools or colleges. Where this is the case, it is important that the DSL works closely with the lead to provide strategic oversight for the outcomes of these children and young people.

INFORMATION SHARING AND MANAGING THE CHILD PROTECTION FILE

The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for ensuring that child protection files are kept up to date. Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. All concerns should be followed up with clear actions and cases closed when the action is complete. Records should be reviewed on a regular basis by the safeguarding team and a record kept with the staff who undertook the review. All concerns should have a clear rationale around decision making and this should be recorded.

Records should include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern.
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved.
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome.
- A clear rationale around decision making.
- Regular pupil voice.
- A record of supervision around the case.

They should ensure the file is only accessed by those who need to see it and where the file or content within it is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice as set out in Part one and Part two of this guidance.

Where children leave the school or college (including in year transfers) the designated safeguarding lead should ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible, and within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure transit, and confirmation of receipt should be obtained.

Receiving schools should ensure key staff such as designated safeguarding leads and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO's), are aware as required.

Lack of information about their circumstances can impact on the child's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. In addition to the child protection file, the designated safeguarding lead should also consider if it would be appropriate to share any additional information with the new school in advance of a child leaving to help them put in place the right support to safeguard this child and to help the child thrive in the school. For example, information that would allow the new school to continue supporting children who have had a social worker and been victims of abuse and have that support in place for when the child arrives.

RAISING AWARENESS

The designated safeguarding lead should:

- Ensure all staff have read and signed Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026 part 1 and the annex
- Ensure all LAB members have read Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026 as the whole LAB are responsible for safeguarding
- Ensure all staff and LAB members have had annual safeguarding training and regular updates
- Ensure all staff and LAB members have annual online safety training
- Ensure staff/LAB member has safer recruitment training and there is always a fully trained member on a recruitment panel
- Ensure a staff member, administrator and LAB member has single central record training
- Ensure each member of staff has access to, and understands, the school's child protection policy and procedures, especially new and part-time staff.
- Ensure the school's child protection policy is reviewed annually (as a minimum) and the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly, and work with governing bodies or proprietors regarding this.
- Ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and parents know that referrals about suspected abuse or neglect may be made and the role of the school or college in this.
- Link with the safeguarding partner arrangements to make sure staff are aware of any training opportunities and the latest local policies on local safeguarding arrangements, and
- Help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children who have or have had a social worker are experiencing with teachers and school and college leadership staff.
- Work with the staff member who oversees attendance, SEND and alternative provision to ensure best outcomes.

- Work with the IT providers to ensure the correct filtering, monitoring and offline back-ups are in place.

TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undergo training and regular supervision to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years (best practice - DSL updates annually). The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undertake Get Safe training every two years, Prevent training every three years, Female Genital Mutilation every three years, Operation Encompass once, domestic abuse training and yearly online safety and cyber security training. All other staff should carry out annual safeguarding, online safety data protection and cyber training at induction and yearly and Prevent training every three years. Safer recruitment training should be carried out by one member of staff and a governor and Single Central Record training should be carried out by the member of staff who updates the record and the member of staff/LAB who checks the record. Training should provide designated safeguarding leads with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific needs that can increase the vulnerability of children, as well as specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly local authority children's social care, so they:

- Understand the assessment process for providing early help and statutory intervention, including local criteria for action and local authority children's social care referral arrangements.
- Have a working knowledge of how local authorities conduct a child protection case conference and a child protection review conference and be able to attend and contribute to these effectively when required to do so.
- Understand the importance of the role the designated safeguarding lead has in providing information and support to local authority children social care in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Understand the lasting impact that adversity and trauma can have, including on children's behaviour, mental health and wellbeing, and what is needed in responding to this in promoting educational outcomes.
- Are alert to the specific needs of children in need, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those with relevant health conditions and young carers.
- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners.
- Understand and support the school with regards to the requirements of the Prevent duty and are able to provide advice and support to staff on protecting children from the risk of radicalisation.
- Are able to understand the unique risks associated with online safety and be confident that they have the relevant knowledge and up to date capability required to keep children safe whilst they are online at school or college.

- Can recognise the additional risks that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) face online, for example, from bullying, grooming and radicalisation and are confident they have the capability to support children with SEND to stay safe online.
- Obtain access to resources and attend any relevant or refresher training courses, and
- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.
- Encourage a culture where staff feel able to report low level concerns and self-refer.

In addition to the formal training set out above, their knowledge and skills should be refreshed (this might be via bulletins, , meeting other designated safeguarding leads, or simply taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments) at regular intervals, as required, and at least annually, to allow them to understand and keep up with any developments relevant to their role.

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO STAFF

Training should support the designated safeguarding lead in developing expertise, so they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters. This includes specifically to:

- Ensure all staff have regular updates about safeguarding including support staff
- Ensure that staff are supported during the referrals processes.
- Support staff to consider how safeguarding, welfare and educational outcomes are linked, including to inform the provision of academic and pastoral support.
- Discussing lessons learnt from serious case reviews and anonymised cases.
- Ensure regular supervision is in place for the DSL and DDSL.

UNDERSTANDING THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN

It is important that all children feel heard and understood. Therefore, designated safeguarding leads (and deputies) should be supported in developing knowledge and skills to:

- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among all staff, and in any measures the school or college may put in place to protect them.
- Understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.
- Consider how to obtain pupil voice from pupils with additional SEND needs.
- Obtain regular pupil voice that is recorded on the schools safeguarding system.

HOLDING AND SHARING INFORMATION

The critical importance of recording, holding, using and sharing information effectively, and therefore the designated safeguarding lead should be equipped to:

- Understand the importance of information sharing, both within the school and college, and with other schools and colleges on transfer including in-year and between primary and secondary education, and with the safeguarding partners, other agencies, organisations and practitioners.
- Understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations, especially the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and
- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals and understand the purpose of this record-keeping.