

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Person was specified in the Children Act 2004 and ensured the every organisation had a “named person” for safeguarding children and young people. Prior to that, the role had frequently been known as the Child Protection Officer. The Designated Safeguarding Person has a responsibility at both a strategic level within the organisation and on a day to day basis.

The school/academy’s Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the first point of contact for any member of the school staff who has a concern about the safety and well-being of a pupil.

**Our school’s
Designated Safeguarding Lead is**

Our Deputy DSL is

and

and

Key Aspects of the Designated Person role includes:

- Making sure all staff are aware how to raise safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring all staff understand the symptoms of child abuse and neglect
- Referring any concerns to social care
- Monitoring children who are the subject of child protection plans
- Maintaining accurate and secure child protection records

Governing bodies, proprietors and management committees should appoint an appropriate senior member of staff, from the school or college leadership team, to the role of designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead should take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, *including online safety and understanding filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place, which are reviewed at least annually*. This should be explicit in the role-holder’s job description. This person should have the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post. They should be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings – and/or to support other staff to do so – and to contribute to the assessment of children.

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 lead(s). Any deputies should be trained to the same standard as the designated safeguarding lead. 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.

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 deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges to define what “available” means and whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and/or Microsoft Teams or other such media is acceptable.
- It is a matter for individual schools and colleges to arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

New in 2026: To ensure continuity of safeguarding responsibilities, schools should implement robust cover arrangements for periods when the DSL is unavailable due to illness, leave, or other circumstances. Schools and colleges have the flexibility and discretion in how these arrangements operate, provided safeguarding responsibilities remain appropriately covered. **It would be good practice that, whenever the DSL is unavailable, there is a clear, reliable, and known arrangement in place so that concerns can be raised.** This could, for example, include a confidential shared mailbox or equivalent system to ensure that safeguarding concerns are received, monitored, and acted upon without delay.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 sets out the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead in Annex B, which includes the following responsibilities:

Managing 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;
- 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.

Working with others

- Act as a source of support of support, advice and expertise for all staff;
- Act as a point of contact with the safeguarding partners;
- Liaise with the headteacher or principal to inform him or her of issues especially ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and police investigations.
- As required, liaise with the “case manager” and the local authority designated officers (LADO), in cases which concern a staff member;
- Liaise with staff on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies;
- Liaise with the senior mental health leads and, where available, the mental health support team, where safeguarding concerns are linked to mental health;
- Promote supportive engagement with parents/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 or college.

- Be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of all concerns, discussions and decisions made, including the rationale for those decisions. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as LA children’s social care or the Prevent programme etc

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. It is good practice to keep concerns and referrals in a separate child protection file for each child.

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.

They should ensure the file is only accessed by those who need to see it and where the file or contact within it is shared, this happens in line with information sharing advice as set out in Part 1 and 2 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. They should understand relevant data protection legislation and regulations.

Raising Awareness

- The designated safeguarding lead should ensure the school or college’s child protection policies are known, understood and used appropriately;
- Ensure the school or college’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 are aware of the fact 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 ensure staff are aware of local training and policies;
- Help promote educational outcomes for children who have or have had a social worker.

Training, knowledge and skills

The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) should undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. This training should be updated at least every two years. Training should support the designated safeguarding lead in developing expertise, so that they can support and advise staff and help them feel confident on welfare, safeguarding and child protection matters.

Understanding the views of children

It is important that children feel heard and understood. Therefore designated safeguarding leads should develop knowledge and skills to encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, and understand the difficulties that children may have in approaching staff about their circumstances, and consider how to build trusted relationships which facilitate communication.

Additional guidance and further reading

Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2026 – Annex B