

Factsheet for schools

Role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL)

The title of this role varies across the four nations. For the purposes of this briefing the title designated safeguarding lead will be used.

October 2017

What is a designated safeguarding lead?

The [designated safeguarding lead](#) is the person appointed to take lead responsibility for child protection issues in school. The person fulfilling this role must be a senior member of the school's leadership team, and the DSL role must be set out in the post holder's job description.

It is good practice to nominate a deputy to cover the role of the designated safeguarding lead when they are unavailable. In large schools it is advisable to have other senior staff who can also take on this role and work as part of a 'designated safeguarding team'. The lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection remains with the DSL.

Do schools have to have a designated safeguarding lead?

All schools must have a designated safeguarding lead in place to deal with child protection concerns.

The DSL or a deputy should always be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Individual schools should decide whether 'available' means the DSL must be on the school premises or whether they can be contacted via telephone or email. Schools should decide what arrangements are made for the availability of the DSL or deputy during out of school activities.

What training does a designated safeguarding lead need?

The designated safeguarding lead (and deputies) should attend [training](#) to enable them to carry out their role. This should be updated every two years as a minimum.

What are the responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead?

The responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead include:

Work with others

The DSL should:

- work with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure safeguarding is at the heart of the school ethos and that all staff are supported in knowing how to recognise and respond to potential concerns.
- liaise with the head teacher or principal to keep them informed of any safeguarding of issues especially ongoing enquiries and police investigations
- as required, liaise with the local authority case manager or the designated officer at the local authority if a concern has arisen regarding a member of staff
- liaise with staff on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies
- act as a source of support, advice and expertise for staff.

Manage referrals

The DSL should:

- refer cases of suspected abuse to Children's Social Care, and support staff who have raised concerns about a child or have made a referral to Children's Social Care
- where there are concerns about radicalisation, to make referrals to the Channel programme and offer support to other staff who have concerns about radicalisation (England and Wales only)
- refer cases to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Disclosure Scotland, or Access NI where a member of staff has been dismissed following concerns they posed a risk to a child.
- refer cases to the police where a crime has been or may have been committed.

Undertake training and develop knowledge

In addition to formal training, the DSL should keep knowledge and skills up to date [via online training](#), [e-bulletins](#), opportunities to network with other DSLs, and attend locally arranged briefings. These opportunities should be taken up at least once a year but more regularly if possible so that the DSL:

- understands the referral and assessment process for early help and intervention
- knows about child protection case conferences and reviews and can contribute to these effectively when required
- ensures that all staff have access to and understand the school's child protection policy
- is aware of the needs of any vulnerable children ie; those with special educational needs, young carers and those receiving support from the local

authority including a child in need, a child on a child protection plan or a looked after child

- keeps detailed, accurate and secure records of concerns and referrals
- understands the role of the school in terms of the Prevent duty where required
- attends refresher and other relevant training
- encourages a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings in terms of what the school does to protect them.

Raise awareness

The designated safeguarding lead's role is to:

- work with the governing body to ensure the school's child protection policy is updated and renewed annually and that all members of staff have access to it and understand it
- provide regular briefings and updates at staff, departmental and governor meetings to help ensure that everyone is kept up to date on latest policy developments and reminded of their responsibilities
- ensure the child protection policy is available publicly and that parents are aware of the policy and that schools may make referrals to children's social care if there are concerns about abuse or neglect
- link with the LSCB (England and Wales), SBNI (Northern Ireland), child protection committees (Scotland) to keep up to date with training opportunities and the latest local policies.

Record keeping

It is also the designated safeguarding lead's responsibility to keep detailed, accurate and secure written records of safeguarding concerns. These records are confidential and should be kept separately from pupil records. They should include a chronology of concerns, referrals, meetings, phone calls and emails.

Where children leave the school or college, ensure their child protection file is transferred to the new school or college as soon as possible. This should be transferred separately from the main pupil file, ensuring secure delivery and confirmation of receipt should be obtained.

Training of other staff

It is the role of the designated safeguarding lead, working with the head teacher, to ensure all staff:

- have induction training covering child protection, an understanding of safeguarding issues including the causes of abuse and neglect.

- are able to identify the signs and indicators of abuse, respond to disclosures appropriately and respond effectively and in a timely fashion when they have concerns.

It is good practice to invite all governors to this training (not just the nominated governor for child protection) so that they all have a basic awareness of child protection.

Further information

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)

[National guidance for child protection in Scotland](#)

[Safeguarding and child protection in schools](#)

[Keeping Learners Safe](#)

Online training for schools

- [Child protection in schools](#)
- [Safer recruitment in education](#)
- [Managing sexualised behaviour in primary schools](#)
- [Keeping children safe online](#)

Contact the NSPCC's Knowledge and Information Service with any questions about child protection or related topics:

Tel: 0808 800 5000 | Email: help@nspcc.org.uk | Twitter: [@NSPCCpro](https://twitter.com/NSPCCpro)

Copyright © 2017 NSPCC Knowledge and Information Services - All rights reserved.